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THE Nation.

DOUBLE ISSUE

FREEDOM FROM OIL

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AUGUST 2/9, 2010
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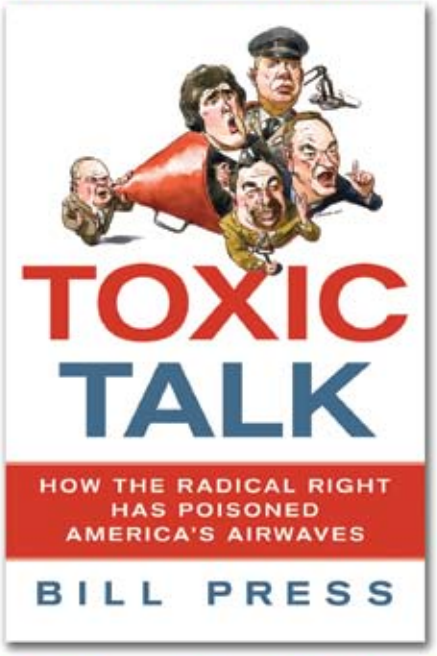

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Letters

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The Nation.
WHY OBAMA SHOULD GO TO JERUSALEM
KAI BIRD
ALSO: ADAM HOROWITZ & PHILIP WEISS ON THE BOYCOTT DIVESTMENT SANCTIONS MOVEMENT

Bird Over Jerusalem

SALISBURY, MD.
I thoroughly agree with Kai Bird's "Next Week in Jerusalem?" [June 28]. I stand in both camps, with a son-in-law who is Jewish; a father who was probably Jewish, although he denied it; and a longstanding friend who is a Palestinian Arab with relatives in Palestine. I would go beyond what Bird says and ask the Israelis to release Marwan Barghouti from prison. It strikes me that he could engineer peace talks. I compare him to Nelson Mandela, imprisoned by South African whites and accused of being a communist and a terrorist. Before the second intifada, I heard a Palestinian leader say, "We didn't engage in terrorism for six years, and it got us nowhere." I was encouraged to hear recently that the Saudis have announced a fatwa against terrorists.
BETTY L. WHITMORE

Drummed in Your Dear Little Ear…

WAVERLY, VA.
In "You've Got to Be Carefully Taught" [June 28] Melissa Harris-Lacewell presents us with her hope that people like Arizona and Texas policy-makers "may find that the world has already moved beyond their fearful grasp." I hope she is right. But this optimistic view misses a larger point that calls for pessimism.

The civil rights movement of the '60s was primarily a political struggle for justice. Somewhere along the way it turned into a cultural struggle for tolerance. The political struggle disappeared, absorbed by the system and converted into something less threatening. There is no denying the enormous progress of the cultural struggle. But there is also no denying the regress in the fight for justice. The Reagan/Bush/Clinton/Bush/Obama era has been one of ever increasing inequity by way of deregulation, tax cuts for the wealthy, cuts to vital social services, corporate bailouts and increased militarization.

We should be grateful for the progress in the "decades-long culture war." But we also need to acknowledge the toll this shift of focus has taken on the political struggle. Cultural progress without political progress is superficial, and it distracts us from the more fundamental problem of injustice. We've been carefully taught indeed.
STEPHEN WARREN

Divesting From Israel

BROOKLYN, N.Y.
Many thanks to Adam Horowitz and Philip Weiss for their thorough June 28 article "The Boycott Divestment and Sanctions Movement." BDS is rapidly becoming one of the defining civil society movements of our time, and the increasing discussion of its tactics and goals, still largely suppressed in most US media, is critically important.

Just since the article was published, Jewish Voice for Peace (jvp.org) has announced a campaign to get pension giant TIAA-CREF to divest from the occupation. This takes divestment nationwide. The campaign debuted with a petition from more than 250 people, including Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky, Michael Ratner, Nadia Hijab, Richard Falk and a dozen rabbis. We secured more than 4,000 signatures in the first thirty-six hours. Clearly, people deeply concerned about Israel's actions are looking for a way to do something, and the BDS movement provides it.
REBECCA VILKOMERSON
Executive director, Jewish Voice for Peace

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Adam Horowitz and Philip Weiss tell a very selective tale about those who support and those who oppose the so-called BDS movement. They speak of a "nod toward the movement" by the Palestinian Authority in terms of the campaign to boycott goods made in settlements. That nod, however, was very much qualified. The article ignored the PA leadership's unequivocal stance that this boycott must not apply to goods made in Israel proper. "We are not boycotting Israel," Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas told

(continued on page 32)

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Deficits of Mass Destruction

If you've been paying attention this past decade, it won't surprise you to learn that the country's policy elites are in the midst of a destructive, well-nigh unhinged discussion about the future of the nation. But even by the degraded standards of the Washington establishment, the growing panic over government debt is shocking.

COMMENT

First, the facts. Nearly the entire deficit for this year and those projected into the near and medium terms are the result of three things: the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Bush tax cuts and the recession. The solution to our fiscal situation is: end the wars, allow the tax cuts to expire and restore robust growth. Our long-term structural deficits will require us to control healthcare inflation the way countries with single-payer systems do.

But right now we face a joblessness crisis that threatens to pitch us into a long, ugly period of low growth, the kind of lost decade that will cause tremendous misery, degrade the nation's human capital, undermine an entire cohort of young workers for years and blow a hole in the government's bank sheet. The best chance we have to stave off this scenario is more government spending to nurse the economy back to health. The economy may be alive, but that doesn't mean it's healthy. There's a reason you keep taking antibiotics even after you start to feel better.

And yet: the drumbeat of deficit hysterics thumping in self-righteous panic grows louder by the day. Judging by its schedule and online video, this year's Aspen Ideas Festival was an open-air orgy of anti-deficit moaning. The festival is a good window into elite preoccupations, and that its opening forum featured ominous warnings of future bankruptcy from Niall Ferguson, Mort Zuckerman and David Gergen does not bode well. Nor does the fact that there was a panel called "America's Looming Fiscal Emergency: How to Balance the Books." This attitude isn't confined to pundits. The heads of Obama's fiscal commission have called projected deficits a "cancer."

The hysteria has reached such a pitch that Republican senators (joined by Nebraska Democrat Ben Nelson) have filibustered an extension of unemployment benefits because it was not offset by spending cuts. Keep in mind, the cost of the extension for people unlucky enough to be caught in the jaws of the worst recession in thirty years is $35 billion. The bill would increase the debt by less than 0.3 percent.

This all seems eerily familiar. The conversation—if it can be called that—about deficits recalls the national conversation about war in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. From one day to the next, what was once accepted by the establishment as tolerable—Saddam Hussein—became intolerable, a crisis of such pressing urgency that "serious people" were required to present their ideas about how to deal with it. Once the burden of proof shifted from those who favored war to those who opposed it, the argument was lost.

We are poised on the same tipping point with regard to the debt. Amid official unemployment of 9.5 percent and a global contraction, we shouldn't even be talking about deficits in the short run. Yet these days, entrance into the club of the "serious" requires not a plan for reducing unemployment but a plan to do battle with the invisible and as yet unmaterialized international bond traders preparing an attack on the dollar.

Perhaps the most egregious aspect of the selling of the Iraq War was its false pretext. It never really was about weapons of mass destruction, as Paul Wolfowitz admitted. WMDs were just "what every-

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COVER DESIGN BY GENE CASE & STEPHEN KLING/AVENGING ANGELS; ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROOKMAN NIYANGODA, EDWIN VAZQUEZ, ED ABRAMS AND DOUG CHAYKA

VOLUME 291, NUMBERS 5 & 6, AUGUST 2/9, 2010
PRINTED JULY 14

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INTERNET: Selections from the current issue become available Thursday night at www.thenation.com.

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one could agree on." So it is with deficits. Conservatives and their neoliberal allies don't really care about deficits; they care about austerity—about gutting the welfare state and redistributing wealth upward. That's the objective. Deficits are just what they can all agree on, the WMDs of this manufactured crisis. Senator John Kyl of Arizona, speaking on Fox, has come out and admitted as much. All new spending increases must be offset, he said, but "you should never have to offset the cost of a deliberate decision to reduce tax rates on Americans." So there you have it.

Remember that the Iraq War might have been prevented had more Congressional Democrats stood up to oppose it. Instead, many of those who privately knew the entire enterprise was a colossal disaster in the making buckled to right-wing pressure and pundit hawks and voted for it. That mistake is being repeated. Despite White House economists' full realization of the need for stimulus in the face of astronomically high unemployment, the *New York Times* has reported that the political minds inside the White House, David Axelrod and Rahm Emanuel, have decided that the public has no appetite for increased spending. "It's my job to report what the public mood is," Axelrod explained. He then showed up on ABC's *This Week* to wave the white flag, saying that the president would continue to press to extend unemployment benefits; conspicuously omitted was any mention of aid to state governments, which had originally been included in the president's June letter to Congress asking for a new stimulus package.

There is hope, however: the public is nowhere near as obsessed with the deficit as are those in Washington. According to a *USA Today*/Gallup poll, 60 percent of Americans support "additional government spending to create jobs and stimulate the economy," with 38 percent opposed. A Hart Research Associates poll published in June showed that two-thirds of Americans favor continuing unemployment benefits. There is also very little public appetite for "entitlement reform," *aka* cutting Social Security.

The lesson of the Iraq War is that over the long haul, good politics and good policy can't be separated. If the White House is tempted to support bad policy in the short term because it seems less risky politically, it should give John Kerry a call and ask him how that worked out for him with Iraq. CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Tea Partyers in Wonderland

The mythmongers in Tea Party land and millions more Americans seem to prefer fiction to fact.

COMMENT

Based on a mid-April *New York Times*/CBS News poll of about 1,600 adults, we learned that 52 percent of Tea Party supporters believe "too much has been made of the problems facing black people." Could it be because 89 percent of the Partyers polled are white? They also have above-average incomes: 31 percent of Tea Partyers earn more than $75,000 a year, as opposed to 26 percent of all poll respondents. A cool 68 percent of Tea Partyers consider themselves middle-class or above. And they're very angry about government spending. As one woman says, "I'm sick and tired of them wasting money" (though she prob-

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ably doesn't want her Medicare or Social Security touched).

If the Tea Partyers think too much is made of problems facing blacks and too much is being spent, can we conclude, ergo, that they think blacks are getting too many handouts? If so, they would not be alone. And they would also be mistaken. In the 1970s their predecessors' prevailing wisdom was that welfare moms drove Cadillacs and luxuriated in government largesse while others (substitute hard-working white folks) were kept from the cookie jar.

So let's set the record straight—for then and now.

One way to see whether blacks are getting too much attention is to look at how funds from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the stimulus package) were distributed among racial groups. Arloc Sherman, a researcher at the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, who checked about 25 percent of the stimulus outlays that went directly to households, found that for every dollar of government benefits—such as for child tax credits, extended unemployment payments and a hike in food stamps—about 64 cents went to non-Hispanic whites, 16 cents to Hispanics, 6 cents to others and 15 cents to non-Hispanic blacks. The percentages roughly correspond to the different groups' num-

Noted.

JUSTICE DENIED: "My son was murdered!" cried **Wanda Johnson**, the mother of **Oscar Grant**, upon hearing that the man who killed him, former Bay Area Rapid Transit police officer **Johannes Mehserle**, had been found guilty of involuntary manslaughter. Anyone who saw the footage of her 22-year-old son's death, recorded with multiple cellphones in the early morning hours of New Year's Day 2009, would be hard-pressed to disagree. The video captured a handcuffed Grant lying facedown on a train platform, showing no sign of struggle, as he was shot in the back. He died the next morning.

Oakland residents know all too well what usually happens when an unarmed black man is shot by a white cop: nothing. Mehserle's criminal trial—which was moved to Los Angeles because of "massive" local coverage—was in many ways remarkable for even occurring. The last time an officer was found guilty of murder or manslaughter in LA County was in 1983, in the case of a deputy who shot a pregnant woman during an illegal home raid, killing her fetus. Despite his anger and disappointment over the outcome—the most lenient verdict short of an acquittal—attorney **John Burris**, who represents Grant's family, called the conviction a "small victory."

For many, this is cold comfort. The verdict sparked violence in the streets—stoked by a breathless media and highly visible "mock riot exercises" by Oakland police in the preceding weeks. But there's still an important lesson to draw from the case. "Mehserle was arrested, charged, given a high bail and ultimately convicted because of community activism," one Oakland activist said. "The verdict is not justice for Oscar Grant, but we're still moving in the right direction." LILIANA SEGURA

FAILING THE REFORM TEST: The final fight over Wall Street reform was a partisan wrangle, with most Democrats backing a modest set of regulatory changes while most Republicans opposed them. But just as a handful of GOP senators broke with their caucus to provide the votes needed to pass the measure, several Democratic critics refused to go along with President Obama, who has argued that the **Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act** is muscular enough to prevent another financial crisis. In the House, Ohio Democrat **Marcy Kaptur**, a passionate foe of bank bailouts who once urged homeowners to refuse to leave houses in foreclosure, objected that the bill "really doesn't do anything to address the continuing mortgage foreclosure hemorrhage." Far from cracking down on Wall Street, Kaptur griped, the measure tends to "support the very same big banks [that caused the crisis] and not the American people and the communities in which we live, in the Main Street that all of us are sworn to represent."

In the Senate, Wisconsin Democrat **Russ Feingold**, who opposed bank deregulation in the 1990s, was equally critical. Noting that the final version of the bill did not renew the basic regulatory structure that was eliminated when Congress overturned the Depression-era Glass-Steagall Act and that it did not control against the threats posed by "too big to fail" banks, Feingold said his "test for the financial regulatory reform bill is whether it will prevent another crisis. The conference committee's proposal fails that test." Feingold explained that while the bill did some good, "the lack of strong reforms is clear confirmation that Wall Street lobbyists and their allies in Washington continue to wield significant influence on the process." JOHN NICHOLS

AN AMERICAN SPLENDOR: Apart from fractious visits to *Late Night With David Letterman* in the late '80s, **Harvey Pekar** was scarcely known beyond comics fans of a certain intense type. The award-winning film *American Splendor* (2003) changed that, bringing Pekar—autodidact, mensch and comic art giant—the public eminence he long deserved. He died on July 12, in Cleveland, home for all seventy years of his life.

The bright, joke-telling son of lower-middle-class, left-leaning Jewish parents, Pekar dropped out of college and eventually took a job at a Veterans Administration hospital, where he worked as a file clerk for thirty-six years. Early on, he met **Robert Crumb**, fresh to Cleveland and greeting card art. As two introspective characters, they grew together, fast friends and allies. Crumb left town; Pekar stayed. A decade later, Pekar began *American Splendor*, inspired by Crumb's comic genius as well as his own novel-reading and gift for listening, **Studs Terkel**–style. His specialty was the quotidian, the daily life of ordinary people.

He produced many books, never actually drawing but always scripting carefully for artists. These covered a wide span of subjects, but the real subject was always, more or less, Harvey Pekar himself. Along with Crumb, **Art Spiegelman**, **Ben Katchor**, **Alison Bechdel** and a very few others, he will be remembered as changing the way people around the world look at comics. PAUL BUHLE

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bers in the population—hardly a windfall for blacks.

The Tea Partyers probably just don't like the poor, period—or that the government provides them with benefits. Although 15 million Americans are out of work and haven't found jobs for months, 73 percent of Tea Partyers think benefits encourage the poor to remain poor. But if they cared to look, they'd see that the wealthy get far more benefits than do those with low incomes. In 1978, when economist Joseph Pechman at the Brookings Institution scoured the federal budget, he found that all programs for the poor totaled $47 billion, while those for middle- and upper-income groups—mostly in the form of tax write-offs—ballooned to $158 billion, more than three times more.

Fast-forward to the present, and it's the same-old same-old. Bob McIntyre, an economist and director of the Washington-based Citizens for Tax Justice, found that in 2007, the bottom 60 percent of American households (with incomes of less than $50,000) benefited from government programs to the tune of $445 billion—no small sum by any arithmetic. Because recipients aren't broken down by race, we can assume blacks get only part of that amount. But at the same time a much smaller group—the top 20 percent, with incomes over $85,000—got a striking $539 billion in tax breaks. Almost $100 billion more! And the top 1 percent of American households—with incomes above $450,000—got $298 billion, or tax savings of $210,000 each.

For the low-income groups, McIntyre tallied programs such as Medicaid (by far the largest); food stamps; Supplemental Security Income (or SSI, for the disabled); housing and home energy assistance; payments to states and local governments for family support, fostercare and daycare; and children's health insurance. For the well-off, he added up the two biggest expenditures—property tax and mortgage interest deductions—along with exemptions for interest on state and local bonds, reduced tax rates for capital gains and dividends, tax credits and various breaks for corporations and businesses. By allowing these tax breaks, the government basically forgoes money it could collect.

McIntyre says Congress originally put tax breaks in the tax code because it wanted Americans to buy things, such as houses, so it gave them a subsidy in the form of tax savings. He also contends that tax write-offs aren't the only way upper-income groups benefit. For example, government spending that would appear to benefit all Americans, such as for highways, bridges, the court system and airports, clearly helps some folks more than others.

"The fact that everyone uses something doesn't mean everyone uses it equally," he explains. For example, the courts exist mainly to resolve business or property disputes, and airports are used very little by those at the bottom.

Given the increasing level of hyperbole, it seems that despite the evidence, Tea Partyers will likely persist with their fairy tales, undaunted.

This brings us to the most famous tea party of all, where the Mad Hatter's remark seemed to Alice "to have no sort of meaning in it." For both sets of partyers, facts are irrelevant. To sort out the mayhem in Wonderland, Alice insists she has "a right to think." To this, the Duchess replies, "Just about as much right as pigs have to fly."

Dedicated to their dogma, which steers clear of details, today's Tea Partyers may truly be the descendants of the Mad Hatter and March Hare, not of the folks who dumped all that tea into the harbor.

BARBARA KOEPPEL

Barbara Koeppel is an investigative reporter based in Washington, DC.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

A Question on the Economic Recovery

"*While much of the country remains fixated on the bleak employment picture, hiring is beginning to pick up in the place that led the economy into recession—Wall Street.*" —*New York Times*

Again, the Wall Street types are thriving.
Can folks, then, who are just surviving
Take heart and contemplate the day
Another Lexus comes their way?

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Check out our **Green Energy** issue online! View a slide show, watch Christian Parenti talk climate change legislation and Mark Hertsgaard discuss oil and Louisiana, and find an archive of *Nation* coverage of alternative energy sources.

Even with supermajorities in Congress behind him, Obama cannot pass the transformative progressive legislation he promised in his campaign. Eric Alterman explains why in **Kabuki Democracy: Why a Progressive Presidency Is Impossible, for Now**.

Each week *Nation* contributors appear on GRITtv to expand on their reporting for the magazine. This week on **The Nation on GRITtv**: JoAnn Wypijewski on the upcoming elections and Daniel Redman on violence LGBT youth face in juvenile justice facilities.

In **Roadblocks to Damascus**, Frederick Deknatel reports that Washington hawks have put the kibosh on Barack Obama's ambassadorial appointment to Syria—further fueling skepticism in the Arab world about the "new beginning" he promised in Cairo last year.

Should progressives embrace Obama's healthcare legislation as a victory? Health Care for America Now's Jeff Blum says yes. Listen in at **Nation Conversations: Jeff Blum on the Battle for Healthcare**.

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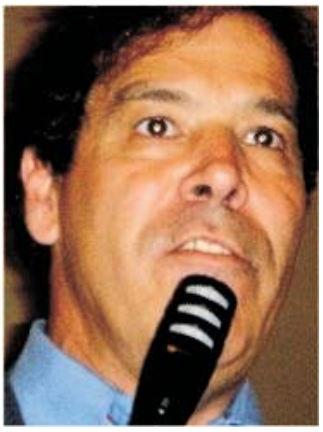
Do you know this man and what he will do on September 14?



You probably don't. And that's too bad.

On September 14 – Primary Day – the New York Democratic Party will pick its nominee for the U.S. Senate seat now occupied by Democratic Senator Charles Schumer. Schumer expects to get the nomination *unopposed*. And why not?

He is arguably the most powerful Democratic politician in America. He's got $21 million in his campaign chest *before the campaign has even started*. He raised millions in corporate cash for the Democratic campaign that put Obama in the White House with a 60-seat Senate majority. Schumer is also the party's shrewdest legislative tactician, knows banking and finance inside and out, may have the highest IQ in the Senate (not much of a compliment), and is a model "KODAK-minute" family man, with nary a whiff of scandal.

Senator Charles Schumer: smart dresser, shameful record

So – what's not to like? Why *shouldn't* Schumer be the Democratic party nominee for New York Senator? Don't we need *more* members in Congress with Schumer's intelligence, ability, focus and drive?

Yes, we do – *but not with Schumer's policies*. Which (if they were more widely known) would make most New Yorkers gag. ❑ He (still) supports the Patriot Act, and wants to make its most repressive elements permanent. ❑ He (still) supports the Iraq/Afghan wars, and wants to send more troops over, instead of bringing home those already there. ❑ He opposes medical marijuana, and supports the racist "War on Drugs" that has unjustly imprisoned millions of African Americans and Latinos. ❑ As a shill for Wall Street and the banks, he pushed through the "sweetheart" bailout deal that gave AIG billions of interest-free taxpayer dollars so his Goldman Sachs friends could be paid off at 100 cents on the dollar. *(Schumer receives more money from banks and Wall Street than any other member of Congress.)* ❑ He is a zealous proponent of the death penalty, and is fighting to *expand* the number of federal crimes punishable by death. ❑ He is also sponsoring a new federal law that would make it almost impossible for poor people to get cell phones. ❑ If that weren't enough, he has proposed a National ID card that would subject citizens to racial profiling and intrusive "stop and frisk" searches at whim.

Too big to fight?

Bad as he is, Schumer is so powerful that no Democrat will run against him in the September 14 primary. Nor will any Democratic officeholders even *endorse* other candidates (much as they might like to) because Schumer will destroy their own careers by funding rival candidates in their local primaries, and crush them with a massive media blitz. Which means Schumer will be nominated *unopposed*, without ever having to discuss, let alone debate, his anti-progressive record.

But not if the man at the top of this page can stop him.

His name is Randy Credico: longtime activist, former head of the William M Kunstler Fund for Racial Justice – and reformed drug addict. Like Democratic Senator Al Franken, Randy is also a professional comedian. But his candidacy is no joke. Not when it has to be financed out of his own bank account, which last week totaled $4,650. (Schumer, as noted, has $21 million.)

A Quixotic effort? Perhaps. But Randy believes that his kind of issue-oriented, satire-saturated political campaign (think Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert on steroids) can be the slingshot that topples this Goliath DINO (Democrat in name only) from his Senate seat.

So what do we ask ? Not that you vote for Randy (although we hope you will), *but only that you help get him on the ballot.* For that, he needs 15,000 Democratic signatures (really 30,000, to fend off challenges), which will cost $27,000 to collect, notarize, and certify. We hope you will go to his website and (1) *sign* his ballot petition, and (2) *donate* a modest sum to his campaign, so he can hire enough trained petitioners to collect the remaining signatures he needs. Please go to www.randycredico2010.org

***Reading* The Nation isn't enough**

There comes a time when one must *act* on what one believes to be right. Randy is doing that, by standing up to the biggest bully in Congress, working 16-hour days, and spending every cent he has. We believe he deserves a place on the NY Democratic ballot so voters can have a meaningful choice on election day. Please – if you want to be able to face yourself in the mirror – don't let Randy hang out there all alone.

Randy Credico's Senate platform is:

NO to the Iraq/Afghan wars
NO to the death penalty
NO to Schumer's National ID Card
NO to racial profiling
NO to the Patriot Act
NO to "sweetheart" bank bailouts

Please sign and donate now at www.randycredico2010.org

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Ten Things.

Ten Things to Foster Socially Responsible Corporations

It is often said that the corporation has been the most effective wealth generator in history. But as the financial crisis and ensuing world recession have starkly illustrated, corporate and social interests are often in deep conflict. And yet, multinational corporations (MNCs) can be a positive force in the global economy, often raising standards of living and work practices when operating in developing nations. Here David Finegold, dean of the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, suggests ways to encourage corporations to meet the interests of the social stakeholders that make their existence possible.

1 Build better boards. Push corporations to increase diversity among directors; listen to outside experts, including critics; tie CEO pay to performance; and consider the interests of employees, customers and communities rather than just investors. Check out the Aspen Principles at http://tinyurl.com/23y765a.

2 Support B corporations. There are more than 300 such companies, which "meet comprehensive and transparent social and environmental standards via the B Rating System" (see bcorporation.net) and are thus committed to generating a positive social impact along with profits. Support legislation in your state, like the recently passed bill sponsored by Maryland State Senator Jamie Raskin, that recognizes these organizations.

3 Promote shared capitalism. Organizations get the best long-term results when they combine employee ownership with a strong employee voice in decision-making. Support the Worker Ownership, Readiness and Knowledge Act. Go to ownershipforall.wordpress.com and nceo.org, and read the March 1 *Nation* article on "The Cleveland Model" of employee-owned businesses.

4 Reform business school education. Courses on sustainability, social entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility and ethics have grown, but we need a more fundamental examination of the purpose of an MBA. Check out Net Impact (netimpact.org) and eabis.org.

5 Enforce existing regulations. More than three-quarters of low-wage US workers are not paid the overtime to which they are entitled, and millions endure minimum-wage and health and safety violations. Perhaps the simplest way to promote more responsible corporate behavior is to enforce laws already on the books. And in addition to lobbying for more government inspectors, we should enlist unions, worker centers and other NGOs to monitor employment practices. Go to the Issues section at nelp.org.

6 Limit corporate political power. Business wields too much power in the political process. This has harmed not only society but often firms themselves, such as when banks pressed for deregulation that, in some cases, led to their own collapse. The recent *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision will most likely exacerbate the problem. For more, and to sign a petition for an amendment overturning it, go to freespeechforpeople.org.

7 Fight the race to the bottom. Competition among states and countries to attract investment and jobs has loosened restrictions on corporate behavior. Measures to combat this trend range from voluntary self-governance (unglobalcompact.org) to activist initiatives to strengthen labor and environmental standards. See workersrights.org and betterwork.org.

8 Support global solidarity. Unions, worker centers and NGOs can use new technologies to build networks counterbalancing the power of MNCs. Especially promising are blue-green alliances and organizations such as Green America (greenamericatoday.org). Check out solidarityexchange.com.

9 Foster alternative organizations. Those with socially responsible practices include microlending combined with microfranchising, public-private partnerships, open-source networks, native corporations and hybrid organizations. Check out Vestergaard-Frandsen (vestergaard-frandsen.com).

10 Put your money where your values are. The most direct way individuals can affect corporate behavior is as consumers and investors. Purchase products and services from socially responsible businesses, and put your retirement savings in socially responsible investment funds, which yield returns comparable to other equity funds (see socialinvest.org). Linking your values to your money sends a clear message to corporations that they can do well by doing good.

CONCEIVED BY WALTER MOSLEY with research by Rae Gomes

"Ten Things" is a monthly feature. Readers who wish to propose ideas for it should e-mail NationTenThings@gmail.com.

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Katha Pollitt

Grisly Mamas

There are lots of conservative white women voters in America. In 2000, white women went for Bush by one point; in 2004, 55 percent chose Bush over Kerry; and in 2008, after all we'd been through, 53 percent chose McCain over Obama. In a way, when we feminists and progressives talk about "women voters" in that rah-rah EMILY's List way, we are buying our own propaganda, because really it's women of color, especially black women, who push "women" solidly into the Democratic camp. By speaking so generally about "women"—whom pundits subdivide into silly pseudodemographics like "waitress moms," "security moms," "*Sex and the City* voters" and so on, each of which receives a specially crafted message—we make it hard to see right-wing women as anything but bizarre exceptions or (more kindly) as women just waiting for the brilliant appeal to some self-interest they didn't know they had.

This mindset explains why so many are surprised that the Tea Party is full of women. It's man bites dog, er, make that woman bites cat—females are supposed to be liberal. A widely cited Quinnipiac University poll reported that the majority of Tea Partyers—55 percent—were women, and Ruth Rosen wrote a thoughtful piece setting out possible reasons why. According to Gallup, women are 45 percent of the Tea Party, but whatever the exact figure, it's safe to say there are a whole lot of Mama Grizzlies out there.

What's strange about that? Men may control political parties and movements, but across the political spectrum women are the workhorses. Indeed, movements have to engage women as well as men or they won't get very far. White women mobilized against women's suffrage and for the KKK, which had hundreds of thousands of female auxiliaries back when the KKK was a respectable family organization. They were grassroots activists in the John Birch Society and the insurgent Goldwater wing of the Republican Party. Then as now, women mobilized as mothers, ordinary women reluctantly laying aside their oven mitts to go out and save America from moral rot. "In the cold war era," historian Michelle Nickerson, author of the forthcoming *Mothers of Conservatism: Women and the Postwar Right*, told me, "women on the right were…on the phone, knocking on doors, getting signatures, planning events, opening bookstores, going to study groups, etc. They were incredibly effective and they created a powerful anti-statist gender ideology that fuels conservative women's politics still." (As a housewife quoted in Rick Perlstein's *Before the Storm* told *Time* magazine in 1961, "I just don't have time for anything. I'm fighting communism three nights a week.")

Historically, right-wing women were put to organizing one another and kept away from real power. That's the sad story of Phyllis Schlafly, who had to concentrate on antifeminism because there was no future for her in foreign policy. But heck, it's 2010, and right-wing women are tired of licking envelopes and knocking on doors to elect yet another jowly good ol' boy. Go Nikki Haley! These days conservative women work, and fundamentalist stay-home moms want to be in public life. They have the same desire for power and respect and a place in the sun that liberal women do. The antiabortion, anti–gay rights and Christian fundamentalist movements funneled right-wing women into party politics; now the Tea Party adds a note of faux kitchen-table "common sense": why shouldn't the government have to balance its budget the way a family does? Why should the virtuous taxpayer "bail out" the lazy and imprudent? Why is this Muslim Kenyan communist running the country?

A lot of liberals are making fun of Sarah Palin's "Mama Grizzlies" ad for her SarahPac. Over scenes of white women waving (or wearing) flags, carrying Tea Party signs (MOMS OPPOSED TO MANDATES—UNCONSTITUTIONAL), attending rallies and having photo ops with Palin herself, the weirdly urgent, electric voice of Palin delivers a speech of apparent contentlessness: women are going to "get things done for our country," are having "kind of a mom awakening," "because moms kinda just know when something's wrong." That's right, sisters: you don't want to mess with Mama Grizzlies when someone's coming after their cubs! To an outsider the ad looks vacuous and unprofessional—didn't they know they had to salt the visuals with more black and brown faces? And how come the only politician you see is Sarah? But the message couldn't be clearer: white conservative women blah blah blah! Tax cuts yes, healthcare reform no! We want our country back! In a country where 55 percent tell pollsters Obama is a socialist, that's really all you need. You can fill in the candidates' names later, when you send in your check.

Are the Tea Party women feminists, as Palin now says she is? The F-word must be on a roll if this canny opportunist is claiming it, but Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton would turn over in their graves at the thought. Feminism has made it possible for right-wing women to play a bigger role in politics than their John Birch predecessors—for example, as Nickerson points out, feminist-driven changes in gender roles have made conservative men more comfortable working with women. But a feminist is someone who, whatever her personal choices, actually supports equality for women—all women. It isn't someone whose main political goal is akin to the notorious Tea Party declaration, "Keep your government hands off my Medicare"—i.e., let's shred the safety net, except for the bits that help *me*. When Tea Party darling Sharron Angle, who wants to criminalize all abortion without exception, says a 13-year-old raped by her father should turn a "lemon situation into lemonade" and have the baby, this is not feminism—it's the saccharine cruelty of the truly oblivious. ■

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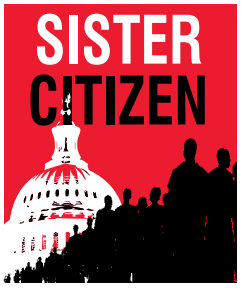
Melissa Harris-Lacewell

Katrina Is Not a Metaphor

I haven't missed an episode of HBO's compelling new series *Treme*. I have watched most of it in bars and restaurants in New Orleans. Creator David Simon has captured much about life in the city. Most critical, the series understands that New Orleans is, at its core, a physical experience. It's routine to spend a Tuesday night standing shoulder to shoulder with 200 strangers in a tin-ceilinged sticky-floor bar, dancing to the blaring horns of a brass band until your hair falls in a wet pile around your ringing ears. *Treme* evokes New Orleans as the unbearable weight of summer's humidity, the sobering perfection of a midnight beignet, the magnificence of a crane taking flight in City Park, the familiar taste of home in a plastic bowl of red beans and rice bought from a street vendor.

Perhaps this is why so many New Orleanians love the show. It feels so… real. Seamlessly incorporated locals like musicians Trombone Shorty and Kermit Ruffins are just the start. The city's landmarks, restaurants, newspapers, T-shirts and taxis are the authentic fixtures that give the show substance. But I worry that, for all its authenticity, *Treme* is ultimately reductive. It is still a fiction whose characters only gesture toward the far more complicated reality they portray.



Take the case of Phyllis Montana-Leblanc, who plays Desiree, the girlfriend of Antoine Batiste, portrayed by Wendell Pierce. Leblanc is not an actor by training. She entered the national scene as the most compelling voice in Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke*. Her personal testimony and stinging analysis were the captivating threads holding Lee's long documentary together. In that film Leblanc told her story with unflinching honesty and well-directed anger, without a hint of self-censorship or self-pity. In *Treme* she is scripted, cast as a fictionalized rendering of herself. Leblanc's story is given back to her as lines written by someone else. Desiree, the character, is an allegory for Leblanc, the citizen.

This representation is especially disturbing because throughout her post-Katrina ordeal Leblanc insisted on her humanity even in profoundly dehumanizing conditions. In her memoir she writes of her frustration while waiting for help to evacuate the flooded city: "I am a person, a living breathing person with a heart beating inside of a body, and you can't help me?" Her insistence that the government violated human rights and flouted basic human dignity resonates throughout her book. But each time her story is mediated—first by Lee's editing and then by the writers and directors of *Treme*—it becomes more palatable, even entertaining. With each translation some meaning is lost.

This is not a criticism of Leblanc; it is a criticism of a pervasive trend, of which *Treme* is perhaps the best example, of reducing Hurricane Katrina to a mere metaphor. These days it is fashionable to use Katrina as a discursive tool.

In March 2009, Frank Rich wondered if AIG bonuses would become Obama's "Katrina moment." A few months later *Politico* reported that "Republicans hope General Motors is President Obama's Hurricane Katrina," only to be topped by the *Washington Times*, which asked, "Will Swine Flu Be Obama's Katrina?" By January of this year the *Wall Street Journal* readily declared that the Haiti earthquake was Obama's Katrina, while Arianna Huffington recently assured readers that it was jobs, not the BP oil spill, that would be Obama's Katrina.

Sometimes it feels like commentators can't wait for another Hurricane Katrina. After all, catastrophes focus public attention, reveal institutional shortcomings and evoke powerful emotional responses. Maybe it was inevitable that Hurricane Katrina would be reduced to a casual metaphor. For thirty years pundits have described political scandal involving intrigue and corruption with the handy suffix "gate." Now Katrina is shorthand for administration-crippling unresponsiveness. Mention Katrina to remind politicians that they need to look concerned and engaged when citizens are suffering. Deploy Katrina as a lesson in bureaucratic incompetence. Shake a scolding Katrina finger at leaders who seem overwhelmed by a current challenge. Katrina is unexpected disaster. Katrina is spectacular debacle. Katrina is the beginning of the end of a flawed leader.

Except that it is not. Eighty percent of the city flooded when the levees failed. More than 1,500 people were killed. Tens of thousands were permanently displaced. Billions in property was lost. The levee failure caused by Katrina wiped away entire communities, irreparably damaging homes, schools, churches and stores. It stole decades of family memories. It altered centuries of tradition in a matter of moments. It left a legacy of blight, economic devastation and personal suffering in its wake.

Each time Katrina, whose fifth anniversary is on the oil-soaked horizon, is evoked as a political metaphor, we risk a dangerous mediation of experience. These metaphors reduce catastrophe to an object lesson, implying that the effects of the disaster have been resolved, that the plot has been resolved and that the continued suffering of our fellow citizens is little more than a literary device.

Yes, New Orleans is a city whose cultural excess and eccentricity cry out for understanding through the literary, the poetic, the musical, the athletic and even the magical. But when we reduce Katrina to fiction—even really good fiction—we risk making it little more than a trope. The fifth anniversary of Katrina reminds us that to fully restore New Orleans, and to change it into a more just and equal city, we must build tangible political will based on sober assessments of the city's continuing challenges.

Katrina is still our Katrina. This story does not yet have an ending. ■

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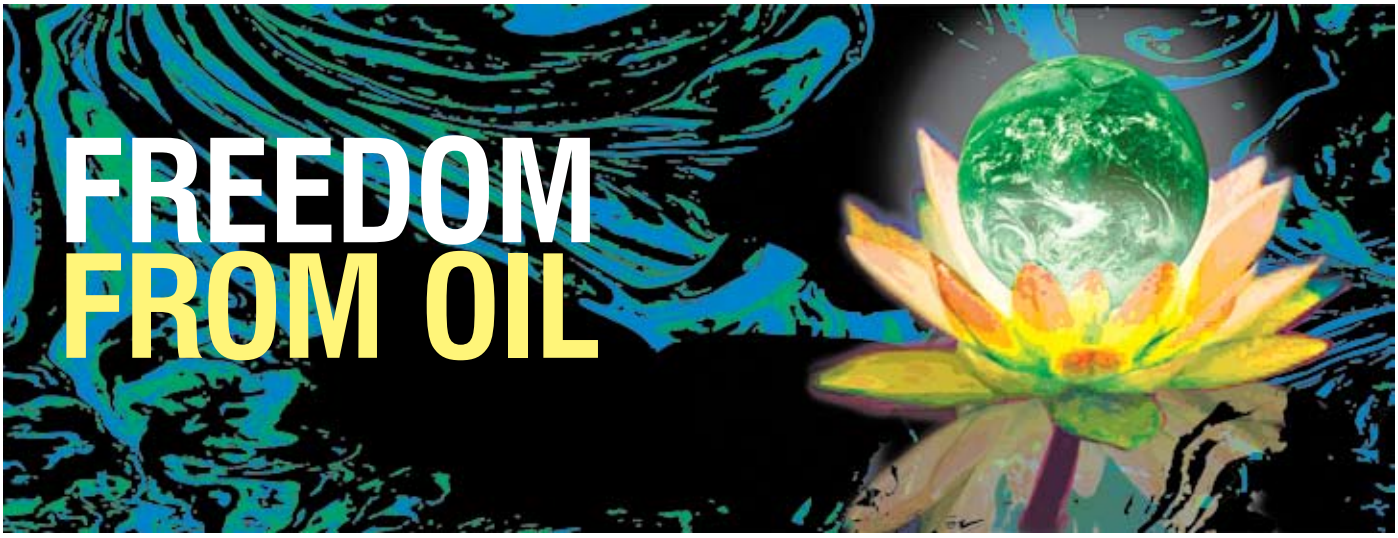

The real solution to the BP oil disaster is obvious: the United States needs to break its addiction to oil. This special issue of The Nation *describes, in practical terms, how the country can rise to that challenge. The forces of opposition are powerful, but the moment is ripe. Most Americans already believe we will soon leave oil behind, according to a* New York Times*/CBS News poll. President Obama could jump-start a green revolution today without spending more money or awaiting approval from Congress, as Christian Parenti explains in his article on page 15. America's broken energy system threatens our economic, military and environmental security. Here's how to fix it.* —*The Editors*

Clean, Green, Safe and Smart

Why the United States needs a new national energy policy.

by MICHAEL T. KLARE

If the ecological catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico tells us anything, it is that we need a new national energy policy—a comprehensive plan for escaping our dangerous reliance on fossil fuels and creating a new energy system based on climate-safe alternatives. Without such a plan, the response to the disaster will be a hodgepodge of regulatory reforms and toughened environmental safeguards but not a fundamental shift in behavior. Because our current energy path leads toward greater reliance on fuels acquired from environmentally and politically hazardous locations, no amount of enhanced oversight or stiffened regulations can avert future disasters like that unfolding in the gulf. Only a dramatic change in course—governed by an entirely new policy framework—can reduce the risk of catastrophe and set the nation on a wise energy trajectory.

By far the most important part of this strategy must be a change in the overarching philosophy that steers decisions on how much energy the United States should seek to produce, of what sorts and under what conditions. It may not seem as if we operate under such a philosophy today, but we do—one that extols growth over all other considerations, that privileges existing fuels over renewables and that ranks environmental concerns below corporate profit. Until we replace this outlook with one that places innovation and the environment ahead of the status quo, we will face more ecological devastation and slower economic dynamism. Only with a new governing philosophy—one that views the development of climate-friendly energy systems as the engine of economic growth—can we move from our current predicament to a brighter future.

One way to appreciate the importance of this shift is to consider the guiding policies of other countries. In March, I had the privilege of attending an international energy conference at Fuenlabrada, just outside Madrid. I sat transfixed as one top official after another of Spain's socialist government spelled out their vision of the future—one in which wind and solar power would provide an ever increasing share of the nation's energy supply and make Spain a leader in renewable energy technology. Other speakers described strategies for "greening" old cities—adding parks, farms, canals and pedestrian plazas in neglected neighborhoods. Around me were a thousand university students—enthralled by the prospect of creative and rewarding jobs in architecture, engineering, technology and the sciences. This, I thought, is what our own young people need to look forward to.

Instead, we are governed by an obsolete, nihilistic energy philosophy. To fully comprehend the nature of our dilemma, it is important to recognize that the gulf disaster is a direct result of the last governing blueprint adopted by this country: the

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National Energy Policy of May 17, 2001, better known as the Cheney plan. This framework, of which the former vice president was the lead author, called for increased drilling in wilderness areas, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as well as in the deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico. Congress did not permit drilling in ANWR, but it wholeheartedly embraced wider exploitation of the deepwater gulf. To speed these efforts, the Bush administration encouraged the Minerals Management Service to streamline the issuing of permits to giant oil firms like BP to operate in these waters. BP clearly took shortcuts when drilling offshore—thus inviting the blowout on April 20—but it did so in a permissive atmosphere established by the 2001 policy framework.

The 2001 energy plan was devised with substantial input from the energy industry—no representatives of the environmental community were invited to the secret meetings held by Dick Cheney to prepare it—and was widely viewed as a payoff to Bush/Cheney supporters in the oil industry. But it was far more than that: at its core, the plan embodied a distinctive outlook on the role of energy in the economy and how that energy should be supplied. This outlook held that cheap and abundant energy is an essential driver of economic growth and that the government's job is to ensure that plentiful energy is endlessly available. As noted by President Bush at the time, "The goals of this strategy are clear: to ensure a steady supply of affordable energy for America's homes and businesses and industries." But not just any sort of energy. In deference to the executives of Chevron, Enron, ExxonMobil and the other energy giants that helped elect Bush in 2000, the plan aimed to extend the life of the nation's existing energy profile, with its overwhelming reliance on oil, coal, natural gas and nuclear power.

The philosophy that produced this disaster—'more energy at whatever the risk'—must be replaced with a forward-looking alternative.

However, a strategy aimed at producing more energy while maintaining reliance on traditional fuels was inherently problematic. Although the concept of "peak oil" was not then in widespread circulation, energy experts were becoming increasingly aware of the impending scarcity of conventional oil—i.e., liquid crude acquired from easily accessible reservoirs. Concerns were also growing about the future availability of easily accessible coal and natural gas. The only way to supply more energy while preserving the existing energy profile, Cheney and his allies concluded, was to increase the level of environmental and political risk, whether by drilling in wilderness areas and the deepwater gulf or by procuring more energy from dangerous and unfriendly areas, such as the Middle East, Africa and the former Soviet Union. This became the underlying premise of the 2001 energy plan and underlies much of the global violence and environmental devastation unleashed by Bush during his eight years in office.

Adherence to the Cheney plan has had another significant downside: it has focused energy investment on the extension of the existing energy paradigm rather than on introducing renewable energy systems. Far greater funds have been devoted to, say, deep offshore drilling and the extraction of gas from shale rock than to advancing wind and solar power. As a result, the United States has fallen behind China, Germany, Japan and Spain in developing next-generation energy systems, jeopardizing our future competitiveness in the global economy.

The philosophy that produced these disasters—"more energy of the existing types at whatever the risk"—must now be repudiated and replaced by a new, forward-looking alternative that stresses innovation and environmental protection. Such an outlook would replace each component of the Bush/Cheney philosophy with its opposite. Instead of growth at any price, it would emphasize energy sufficiency—the minimum amount needed to accomplish vital tasks. Instead of clinging to existing, environmentally damaging fuels, it would harness America's ingenuity in the development of new, climate-friendly fuels. And instead of embracing environmental and political risk as a solution to scarcity and excessive greed, it would favor domestically produced, renewable systems that largely eliminate the element of risk. To compress this into a nutshell, the new outlook would favor energy that's "clean, green, safe and smart."

What, in practice, would this entail?

First, let's take a closer look at "sufficiency"—the basis for all else. By energy sufficiency, I mean enough energy to meet basic consumer and industrial needs without succumbing to a bias for waste and inefficiency, as is now the case. For example, if X number of American commuters must drive Y number of miles every day to work, sufficient energy would be the amount needed to power the most fuel-efficient personal or public-transit vehicles available, rather than the most inefficient. Likewise, sufficient heating energy would be the amount needed to heat American homes and businesses if all were equipped with the most efficient heating and insulation systems. A wise energy policy would aim to provide whatever is needed when all reasonable measures for efficiency have been factored in—and no more than that. Of course, the transition from inefficient to efficient transportation, heating and industrial systems will be costly at first (the costs will go way down over time), so a wise policy would provide subsidies and incentives to facilitate the transition.

Defining what constitutes sufficient energy will require considerable time and effort. But thanks to visionaries like Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute, enough is known about the potential energy savings of various conservation and efficiency initiatives to be confident that our economy can produce more in the years ahead using far less energy. Likewise, Americans can lead equally satisfying lives with less energy use. For example, if every car owner in America drove a gas/

Michael T. Klare, The Nation*'s defense correspondent, is professor of peace and world security studies at Hampshire College. His latest book is* Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy.

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About Your Professor

Dr. Anthony A. Goodman is Adjunct Professor of Medicine at Montana State University and Affiliate Professor in the Department of Biological Structure at the University of Washington School of Medicine. A fellow of the American College of Surgeons, he spent 20 years as a general surgeon.

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electric hybrid or superefficient conventional vehicle instead of one getting about twenty miles per gallon (the current national average), we could reduce our daily oil intake by as much as 4–5 million barrels per day (of a total consumption of approximately 20 million barrels). And if the hybrids were of a plug-in type that could recharge their batteries at night when power plants have surplus capacity, the oil requirement could be reduced by several million more barrels without requiring additional power plants. Clearly, we don't need more oil to satisfy our transportation needs; we need more efficiency.

By seeking energy sufficiency instead of constant growth, we free ourselves of a tremendous burden. It is impossible to keep expanding the net supply of energy and reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and uranium-powered fission; the only sure way to achieve growth is to supply more of every fuel available. Once you abandon the commitment to growth, however, it is possible to begin the truly critical task: reducing our reliance on traditional fuels while significantly increasing the share of energy provided by alternatives.

To put things in perspective, fossil fuels now provide about 84 percent and nuclear power about 8.5 percent of America's net energy supply; renewables, including hydropower, provide a mere 8 percent. Although the amount of energy provided by renewables is expected to grow in the years ahead, the United States is projected to need so much more energy under its current path—114.5 quadrillion British thermal units per year in 2035, compared with approximately 100 quadrillion today—that it will need much larger amounts of oil, gas and coal to supply the necessary increase. As a result, says the Energy Department, we will rely more on fossil fuels in 2035 than we do today, and will be emitting greater quantities of carbon dioxide.

Clearly, the existing path leads us ever closer to environmental catastrophe. Only by freezing (and eventually reducing) the total amount of energy consumed and reversing the ratio between traditional and alternative fuels can disaster be averted. A progressive energy policy would aim to achieve a ratio of 50:50 between traditional and renewable fuels by 2030, and by 2050 would confine fossil fuels and nuclear power to a small "niche" market.

Accepting the necessity of switching to noncarbon alternatives, what are the "clean, green and safe" fuels that America should rely on? Any source of energy chosen to meet the nation's future requirements should meet several criteria: it must be renewable, affordable, available domestically and produce zero or very low amounts of greenhouse gas emissions. Several fuels satisfy two or three of these qualities, but only one—wind power—meets all of them. When located at reliably windy spots and near major transmission lines, wind turbines are competitive with most existing sources of energy and have none of their disadvantages. Solar power comes close to wind in its appeal, possessing great utility for certain applications (such as rooftop water heating); still, electricity derived from existing photovoltaic cells remains uncompetitive with other fuels in most situations. Geothermal, tidal and wave energy show great promise but will need considerable development to be commercially applicable on a large scale. Biofuels derived from cellulose or algae also look promising, but they, too, require more work. Further out on the development path are hydrogen and nuclear fusion; it will take at least another generation or two before they will achieve widespread commercial utility.

Some within the environmental community argue for short-term reliance on some combination of natural gas, nuclear fission and coal, using the carbon capture and storage process as a "bridge" to renewable fuels, recognizing America's slow start in adopting the latter. While a case can be made for each of these, not one is clean, green and safe. Natural gas, while emitting less carbon dioxide than other fossil fuels, is increasingly being derived from shale rock through the environmentally risky process known as "hydraulic fracturing" [see Kara Cusolito, "The Next Drilling Disaster?" June 3]. Nuclear fission produces radioactive waste that cannot be stored safely. Likewise, there is no assurance that carbon separated from coal can be stored safely for long periods of time. It follows that a wise policy would seek to leapfrog these technologies and move as rapidly as possible to renewable sources of energy.

With this in mind, the basic goal of a new national energy policy should be to minimize the use of existing fuels while ramping up the development and use of truly green alternatives—which requires not just technological innovation but a concerted effort to bring the new technologies to scale in the market, as Christian Parenti argues in the following article. The transition will also require a change in the way energy is distributed. At present a large share of our energy, in the form of oil, natural gas and coal, is delivered by pipeline, rail and truck. Most renewables, however, will be delivered in the form of electricity. This will require a massive expansion of the nation's electrical system—and its transformation into a "smart grid" that can rapidly move energy from areas of strong wind or sun (depending on weather conditions) to areas of peak need. A smart grid would also allow people to install their own energy-generating systems—solar panels, wind turbines, hydrogen fuel cells—and sell surplus energy back to the system.

Specifically, this policy would seek to:

§ dramatically increase the use of wind power by adding more turbines and by increasing links to an expanded national electrical grid;

§ increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of solar energy, especially photovoltaics and solar-thermal power;

§ accelerate the development of geothermal, tidal and wave power as well as biofuels derived from cellulose and algae, and expand research on hydrogen fuel cells and nuclear fusion;

§ create a national "smart grid" capable of absorbing a vast increase in wind, solar, geothermal and wave power and delivering it to areas of greatest need;

§ spur the development, production and acquisition of super-energy-efficient vehicles, buildings, appliances and industrial processes;

§ accelerate the transition from conventional vehicles to hybrids, from regular hybrids to plug-in hybrids and from hybrids to all-electric automobiles;

§ encourage and facilitate greater personal reliance on inter-

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city rail, public transit, bicycles and walking.

To achieve these goals, the government will have to assemble policy tools and funding devices. All incentives and subsidies for fossil fuel extraction and nuclear fission should be phased out, and like amounts directed toward the development of promising renewables and the further modernization and expansion of the electrical grid. Liberal tax breaks should be awarded to households and small businesses that invest in energy-saving heating, cooling and lighting systems; similar breaks should be offered for the purchase of hybrid and electric vehicles. Many key initiatives, such as the construction of regional high-speed rail lines, will be costly. To finance such endeavors, taxes on gasoline and other carbon-based fuels should be increased as payroll taxes are decreased, thus encouraging job growth while discouraging carbon pollution; rebates should also be given to cushion the effect on low-income people. In addition, a ten-year, $250 billion energy innovation fund should be established to provide low-interest loans for commercializing promising new technologies being developed at universities and start-up firms around the country; once repaid, these funds could then be used to fund other such endeavors.

The Cheney plan envisioned, among other goals, building 1,000 new nuclear power plants by 2030. By contrast, the new energy policy envisioned here would have the following goals:

§ create 5 million jobs through the pursuit of a green energy revolution, with a focus on the construction and manufacturing sectors, as outlined by the nonprofit group the Apollo Alliance;

§ maximize the nation's energy efficiency—in transportation, heating, electricity and all other sectors—such that total energy demand declines by at least 50 percent by 2050, as documented in a comprehensive study by Greenpeace International and the European Renewable Energy Council;

§ phase out oil consumption, except in niche markets, by 2030;

§ formalize the current de facto moratorium on constructing new coal-fired power plants, phase out existing plants as well and halt all coal use by 2020;

§ supply at least 75 percent of US electricity from wind, solar and other renewable sources by 2030 and 99 percent by 2050, as described in the Greenpeace-EREC study;

§ shift the US vehicle fleet to all-electric cars by 2035, to be powered with renewable energy;

§ reduce US greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels) by at least 90 percent by 2050, as described in the Greenpeace-EREC study.

There is not enough space here to argue the case for each of these specifics, but the essential elements of the new energy policy our nation needs are these: a guiding philosophy, a vision of the intended outcome, an assessment of the possible energy sources and an outline of tools for implementation. Each of the final three can be modified as necessary to account for global events and scientific advances; but adherence to the first is critical. Adopting an enlightened new philosophy to guide our nation's future energy plans is the single most valuable thing we can do in the wake of the Deepwater Horizon tragedy. ■

The Big Green Buy

How Obama can use the government's purchasing power to spark the clean-energy revolution.

by CHRISTIAN PARENTI

In the wake of the BP oil spill, some captains of industry have begun calling for government leadership to spur a clean-energy revolution. In June billionaire software mogul Bill Gates visited Washington and encouraged lawmakers to pony up public subsidies to triple clean-tech R&D funding from $5 billion to $16 billion annually. Gates explained to the *Washington Post* that much of what is touted as free-market innovation was born of government subsidies: "The Internet and the microprocessor, which were very fundamental to Microsoft being able to take the magic of software and having the PC explode, were among many of the elements that came through government research and development." And on his website Gates wrote, "When it comes to developing new sources of energy, and ways to store that energy, I believe the federal government needs to play a more active role than it does today."

ROOKMAN NIYANGODA

Gates's acknowledgment of the need for government intervention is welcome, but he and many others are stuck on "innovation." The fixation on new "game-changing" technology is omnipresent. Think of the metaphors we use: a green Manhattan Project or a clean-tech Apollo Program. It recalls Tocqueville's observation that "the American lives in a land of wonders, in which everything around him is in constant movement, and every movement seems an advance. Consequently, in his mind the idea of newness is closely linked with that of improvement."

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Yet according to clean-tech experts, innovation is now less important than rapid large-scale implementation. In other words, developing a clean-energy economy is not about new gadgets but rather about new policies.

An overemphasis on breakthrough inventions can obscure the fact that most of the energy technologies we need already exist. You know what they are: wind farms, concentrated solar power plants, geothermal and tidal power, all feeding an efficient smart grid that, in turn, powers electric vehicles and radically more energy-efficient buildings.

But the so-called "price gap" is holding back clean tech: it is too expensive, while fossil fuels are far too cheap. The simple fact is that capitalist economies will switch to clean energy on a large scale only when it is cheaper than fossil fuels. The fastest way to close the price gap is to build large clean-tech markets that allow for economies of scale. So, what is the fastest way to build those markets? More research grants? More tax credits? More clumsy pilot programs?

No. The fastest, simplest way to do it is to reorient government procurement away from fossil fuel energy, toward clean energy and technology—to use the government's vast spending power to create a market for green energy. After all, the government didn't just fund the invention of the microprocessor; it was also the first major consumer of the device.

Call it the Big Green Buy. The advantage of this strategy is that it is something Obama can do right now, without waiting for Congressional approval to act. As such, it amounts to a real test of his will to make progress in the fight against climate change.

The advantage of the Big Green Buy is that it is something that Obama can do right now, without waiting for Congressional approval.

Consider this: altogether federal, state and local government constitute more than 38 percent of our GDP. Allow that to sink in for a moment. The federal government will spend $3.6 trillion this year. In more concrete terms, Uncle Sam owns or leases more than 430,000 buildings (mostly large office buildings) and 650,000 vehicles. The federal government is the world's largest consumer of energy and vehicles, and the nation's largest greenhouse gas emitter. Add state and local government activity, and all those numbers grow by about a third again.

A redirection of government purchasing would create massive markets for clean power, electric vehicles and efficient buildings, as well as for more sustainably produced furniture, paper, cleaning supplies, uniforms, food and services. If government bought green, it would drive down marketplace prices sufficiently that the momentum toward green tech would become self-reinforcing and spread to the private sector.

The good news is that despite our sclerotic, largely right-wing Congress, government agencies are turning toward procurement as a means to jump-start clean tech and cut emissions.

Perhaps the most important move in this direction came in October 2009, when President Obama quietly signed Executive Order 13514, which directs all federal agencies to "increase energy efficiency; measure, report, and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions from direct and indirect activities; conserve and protect water resources through efficiency, reuse, and stormwater management; eliminate waste, recycle, and prevent pollution; leverage agency acquisitions to foster markets for sustainable technologies and environmentally preferable materials, products, and services; design, construct, maintain, and operate high performance sustainable buildings in sustainable locations."

The executive order also stipulates that federal agencies immediately start purchasing 95 percent through green certified programs and achieve a 28 percent greenhouse gas reduction by 2020. The stimulus package passed in 2009 included $32.7 billion for the Energy Department to tackle climate change, and some of that money is now being dispersed to business and federal agencies.

Already some federal agencies are installing energy management systems and new solar arrays in buildings, tapping landfills to burn methane and replacing older vehicles with plug-in hybrids and soon some all-electric vehicles. But it is the green procurement part of the executive order that is most interesting.

Government has tremendous latitude to leverage green procurement because it requires no new taxes, programs or spending, nor is it hostage to the holy grail of sixty votes in the Senate. It is simply a matter of changing how the government buys its energy, vehicles and services. Yes, in many cases clean tech costs more up front, but in most cases savings arrive soon afterward. And government—because of its size—is a market mover that has already shown it can leverage money-saving deals.

Currently, the price gap relegates clean tech to boutique status: San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom owns an electric car; SF City Hall has three electric-vehicle charging stations; nationwide there are about 55,000 electric vehicles and 5,000 charging stations. Groovy.

However, back on Planet America the asphalt transportation arteries are clogged with 250 million gasoline-powered vehicles sucking down an annual $200–$300 billion worth of fuel from more than 121,000 filling stations. Add to that the cost of heating and cooling buildings, jet travel, shipping, powering industry and the energy-gobbling servers and mainframes that are the Internet, and the US energy economy reaches a spectacular annual tab of $2–$3 trillion.

The clean-tech price gap is partly the result of old dirty tech's history of subsidies ($72.5 billion between 2002 and 2008), but it is also the result of the massive economies of scale that the fossil fuel industry enjoys. In other words, gas pumps and gasoline are cheaper when you buy in bulk.

Closely associated with the price gap is another concept, which clean-tech developers call the "valley of death." This is the time in a technology's life cycle when capital dries up, the

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time between a technology's initial invention and its successful application as a moneymaking commodity.

A report by Ernst & Young found that a typical technological innovation—like the flatscreen TV or the cellphone—costs about $20–$100 million to invent but about $1 billion to deploy at competitive prices. Between government subsidies and capital markets, there is often enough financing available to invent new gadgets or buy into a mature and profitable business. But there is a dearth of capital for new companies trying to cross that gap between victory in the lab and victory in the market.

Smith Electric Vehicles, of Kansas City, is one company that would benefit immensely if government started robust green procurement. Currently Smith, the US affiliate of a British firm that has been making electric delivery trucks for eighty years, turns out about twenty units a month. The vehicles—flatbeds, refrigerator trucks, basic box-style delivery trucks—all require components that Smith buys on the open market.

"If we could buy gear boxes in batches of a hundred rather than ten at a time, they could be cast to our specifications rather than each one machined. That would immediately cut the cost by 30 to 40 percent," says Smith CEO Bryan Hansel. Similar savings would be available for other inputs like steel chassis, cabs, drive shafts, suspensions and wiring harnesses, all of which are purchased from the same suppliers used by diesel- and gas-powered vehicle makers.

There is a dearth of capital for new companies trying to cross the gap between victory in the lab and victory in the market.

In March Smith received a $32 million Energy Department grant that will help it offset the cost of its trucks. But what would really give it a boost is an order of 1,000 trucks a year for the next ten years, from, say, the Defense Department or the Postal Service or the General Services Administration (GSA). If that happened, Smith's plans to open twenty more small manufacturing facilities around the country would shift into high gear.

"We have approached the DoD about nontactical vehicles, like trucks that are used on bases here in the US. They bought four of our vehicles for testing. So we're hopeful," says Hansel. The Defense Department has 160,000 nontactical vehicles, many of which are suitable for electrification.

In other respects, the military is one of the most avid adaptors of clean technology. Of all the energy the federal government consumes, 80 percent is used by the Defense Department. The cost of delivering fuel to forward operating areas can be as high as $400 a gallon, by some estimates. And according to an Army Environmental Policy Institute report, 170 soldiers died and many more were horribly maimed just protecting fuel in combat zones during 2007. For purely strategic reasons the military is trying to free itself (at least a bit) from its clumsy and very long fossil fuel tether.

Thus the military is experimenting on a large scale with green technology. Fort Irwin, in California, is building a 500 megawatt (that is big) solar power plant and is on track to become self-sufficient in electricity use within a decade. Fort Leavenworth is undergoing an energy retrofit that a Pew report described thus: "energy efficiency improvements are made by a private-sector firm at no upfront cost to the Army, with resulting savings shared by the base and the contractor." The list goes on, but unfortunately most of the changes are relatively small scale.

Government procurement, particularly the military's, would become significantly greener if two recently introduced bills became law. The Department of Defense Energy Security Act of 2010, introduced by Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona, would require the department to derive a quarter of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025. And—good news for Smith Electric Vehicles—the bill also calls, rather ambitiously, for a full-scale conversion of the military's nontactical vehicle fleet to electric, hybrid or alternative-fuel vehicles by 2015.

A similar bill, introduced by Democrat José Serrano of New York, would require the Postal Service to purchase at least 20,000 electric vehicles by 2015. That goal is reasonable, and the USPS is a perfect place to start, as most of its vehicles travel in loops of less than 20 miles each day and always park in the same garage. Thus, even current battery technology is sufficient. Many other government fleets fit the same profile: they have regular routes of less than 100 miles a day and use the same parking spot each night, so they are easy and cheaper to charge because the price of juice drops at night.

Right now a vehicle from Smith is about 20 percent more expensive than a standard gas or diesel truck. But the cost per mile to run an electric truck is about one-third the cost per mile of a gas- or diesel-powered one. Hansel says that with enough large orders his product will reach cost parity with dirty-tech options. When that happens, large private-sector fleets, like UPS, FedEx, Staples and Frito-Lay, will start buying electric vehicles simply because it will be the cheaper option.

In anticipation of that day, Nissan is releasing the 2011 Leaf, a fully electric plug-in car. It plans to make 90,000 of them. Chevy is coming out with the Volt—10,000 of them. Will this first generation of EVs really have a market, and sufficient charging options? Who knows? But you can be sure they would if Big Government made the Big Green Buy.

Buildings also use lots of energy. The US Green Building Council reports that buildings account for about 36 percent of America's total energy use and emit roughly the same proportion of greenhouse gases. But if properly constructed and managed, many buildings could actually generate energy for their own use, for vehicles or to put back into the grid.

The government's building manager—its janitor, if you will—is the GSA. The GSA constructs, repairs and manages federal buildings; it buys the supplies and keeps the heat and AC on; and it buys and maintains much of the government's

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nonmilitary vehicle fleet. It also acts as a purchaser and contractor of sorts for most other federal agencies. The GSA is about as dull an agency as you can imagine. It has pocket-protector and brown shoes written all over it. But in the age of climate change, its brief has taken on vital importance. The implications of Executive Order 13514 have put the GSA, along with the military, at the cutting edge of the Big Green Buy.

"We're taking this very seriously," says Martha Johnson, administrator of the GSA. "We are normally sort of overlooked, but we were thrilled, really excited, when the president gave us such prominent place in his environmental strategy."

President Bill Clinton issued four executive orders on sustainable clean procurement, but they lacked specific targets or enforcement mechanisms and thus achieved very little. "Our progress in general in buying these products stinks," said Dana Arnold, senior program manager at the White House Office of the Federal Environmental Executive in a recent interview with the *Federal Times*.

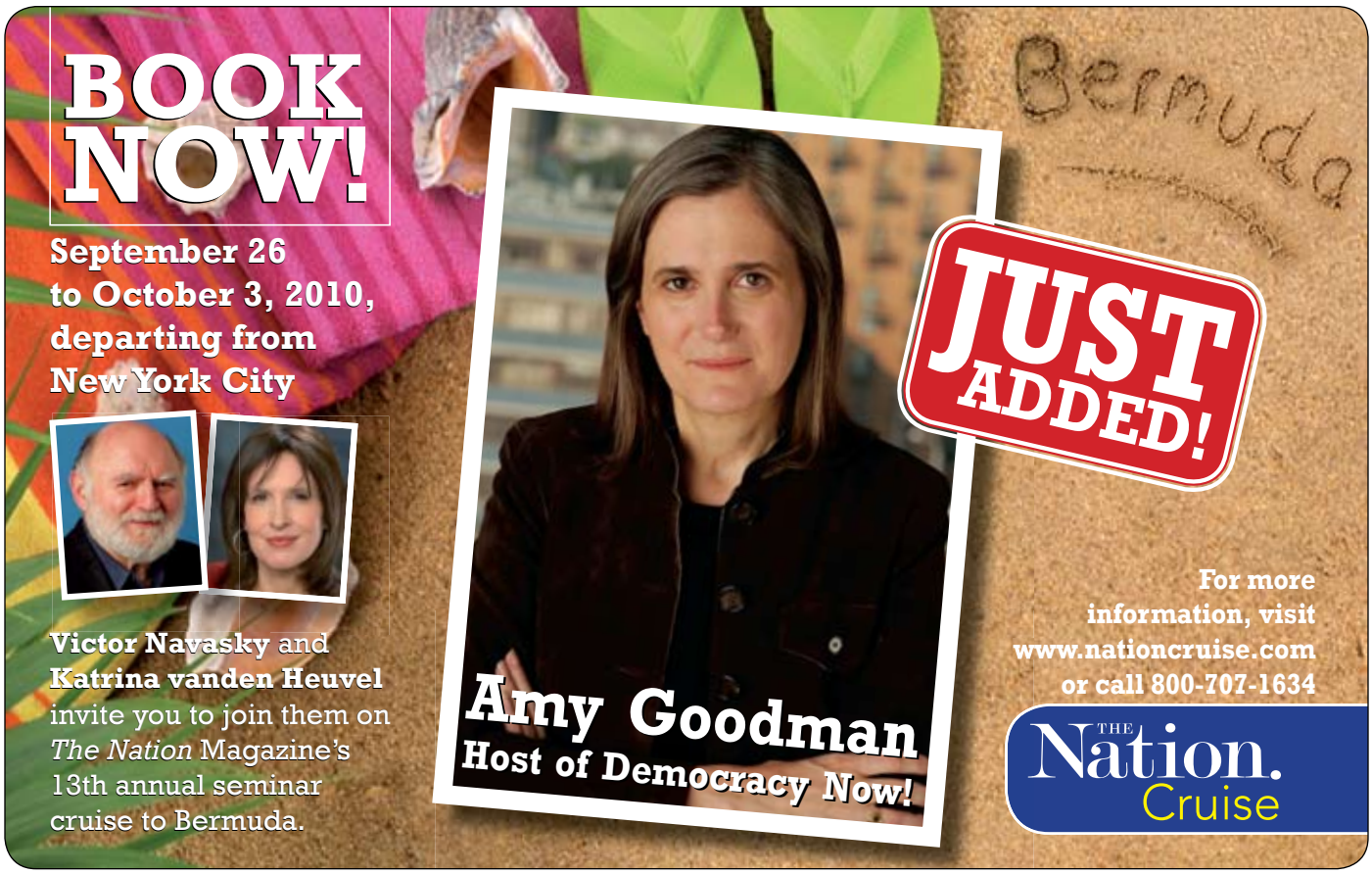
This time it may be different, and the GSA is gearing up to be the point agency in what is sometimes called Environmentally Preferable Procurement, or "green supply chain management." The GSA is putting up solar arrays, buying a few electric cars and hybrids, trying to produce energy at its buildings and buying renewable energy like biomass, solar and wind power, which now account for 10.8 percent of the GSA's federal building power supply. It is also creating monitoring systems to track progress and keep federal agencies accountable.

The GSA's sustainability plan requires "a minimum of three percent renewable energy source for all competitive electricity supply contracts and requires that renewable energy be from a plant that was recently built in order to stimulate greater investment in the industry." The agency has reduced its own energy use by 15 percent, as measured against a 2003 baseline, and plans to reduce energy consumption in its buildings by 30 percent from that baseline by 2020. Already the GSA's building stock—mostly offices—is about 22 percent more efficient than similar private-sector buildings.

In addition, the GSA is working on cutting the amount of jet travel its workforce requires and, when possible, increasing telecommuting and home-based work. It is also pressuring other agencies to shut off unused data centers—the USDA, for example, uses only between 10 percent and 20 percent of its total computing capacity, but its huge, largely empty servers run at 100 percent of power.

Other federal agencies, however, are lagging far behind. "It is amazing to us to find out the low level of awareness," says Linda Mesaros, a consultant for sustainable purchasing. State and local governments are also moving toward green procurement, but few have been very aggressive or ambitious.

Nor are the main pieces of energy and climate legislation focusing on procurement. The American Energy Innovation Council—which includes Bill Gates and executives from companies like Xerox, General Electric and Bank of America—is lobbying for a research plan and money and pilot programs all focused on expensive and spectacular new technology, like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small fourth-generation nukes. The plan totally ignores the Big Green Buy strategy.

Another group, the Electrification Coalition—made up of CEOs from FedEx, Nissan and PG&E—has published an ambitious 180-page plan for converting America's light-duty vehicle fleet to 75 percent electric miles by 2040. It also calls for radically upgrading America's old, overburdened, semi-deregulated and thus chaotic electrical grid, which loses about twice as much power in transmission as it did in the 1970s. The EC is lobbying hard and has helped shape the Electric Drive Vehicle Deployment Act of 2010, legislation being championed by Representative Ed Markey.

But again, neither Markey's staff nor the EC is comfortable demanding the Big Green Buy. "We don't think that is the best approach" was all I could get from a Markey staffer. Instead, the EC proposes a Rube Goldberg–style scheme of geographic target areas that will receive multiple layers of consumer and industry tax credits and tax breaks—$7 billion total. That may sound big, but in the face of the climate crisis it is Lilliputian.

This approach is emblematic of the intellectual poverty of the political class and business elites. The bill is entirely too clever for its own good, painfully complicated in its tinkering instrumentalism, which in the end would do very little and do it too late, like an impoverished family scrounging for dinner money on the eve of their eviction. And the Electric Drive Vehicle Deployment Act will be red meat to the climate deniers and fiscal hawks. You can almost hear the derision now: if yuppies in Berkeley want to drive funny new plug-in cars, why do we have to pay for it?

Viewed broadly, there are four simple things the government can do to help close the clean-technology price gap and aid clean-tech business across the valley of death.

First, it can boost R&D as Gates has requested, but that alone won't bring mass-scale green power on line.

Second, it can set up a Green Bank tasked with financing clean-tech businesses as they cross the valley of death. Along with loans, the government can offer more loan guarantees, which encourage otherwise frightened private capital to invest in clean-energy start-ups. The Waxman-Markey climate bill of last year included language to do that, but nothing like it is yet law.

Third, the government can impose mandates on the private sector requiring companies to adopt electric vehicles, purchase clean energy and conserve energy. Industry already lives with numerous rules that put limits on the anarchy of production. Yet in the crazy world of American politics circa 2010, forcing green procurement mandates on business would be very difficult.

So let's get real. The fourth path is the best: a robust program of green procurement is the most immediate and politically feasible thing government can do to boost the clean-tech sector. And the only number that approaches the scale of the energy economy is government spending on energy. We need to be talking not about millions or billions but trillions of dollars going in a new direction. If the government is serious about electric vehicles—then just buy them already!

At one level, the mad Tea Partyers are correct: government is leviathan—a monster. But it is our monster, and with proper leadership even this government in the current climate could jump-start a clean-energy revolution. ■

Kicking the Oil Habit

Louisiana can't go cold turkey: it can only wean itself off oil through an orderly transition.

by MARK HERTSGAARD

Port Sulphur, Louisiana

Captain Pete, as everyone in town calls him, has been an oysterman nearly his entire life. He started as a boy, learning the trade from his father, who had learned it from *his* father. Working fourteen-hour days from leased oyster beds in Barataria Bay, forty miles south of New Orleans, Captain Pete's family supplied the city's premier vendor, P&J Oyster Company. When P&J closed its doors on June 10, it was front-page news in New Orleans—one more in a string of casualties of BP's deep-sea oil catastrophe.

EDWIN VAZQUEZ

"It took fifty days for BP's oil to reach our beds," Captain Pete tells me as he steers a flatboat out to survey the damage one steamy afternoon. Video he shot a few days before showed streaks of oil the texture of jello staining the marsh grasses that shelter his oyster beds. "Those grasses will shrivel and die," he says in an accent so thick I struggle to comprehend him. With time, and a respite from additional oil, the grasses could grow back and oyster harvesting resume, he adds. But this year's harvest is a total loss, and since BP's gusher clearly isn't going to be plugged anytime soon, much more oil is certain to slather those grasses.

So it makes sense that Captain Pete would welcome President Obama's moratorium on deep-sea drilling. Except he doesn't. The captain lost his house in Hurricane Katrina five years ago, and now the BP disaster may bankrupt the family business, which was helping to put his son through college. But the moratorium? To Captain Pete, it's one more

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lunacy imposed on coastal Louisiana by outside "experts," a group he neither trusts nor respects. Invoking an analogy I heard countless times during a week of reporting there, he asks, "When a airplane crashes, do you ground every plane in the country? No. You find out what caused the problem and fix it. You don't punish the entire industry." He points a well-muscled arm toward the dozens of other shrimp and fishing boats docked nearby. "Sixty percent of these guys work on oil rigs, or they service rigs, during the [seafood] off-season," he explains. "The economy here was just getting back on its feet after Katrina. This moratorium will kill us."

Anyone who is serious about the United States kicking its oil habit in the wake of the BP disaster must confront the realities of Louisiana, a state whose economy, politics and self-image have been saturated in oil for more than a century. They must have an answer for Captain Pete and other locals who are cursing BP even as they wonder how they will support their families if the oil and gas industry—widely regarded as the source of the best-paying blue-collar jobs in Louisiana—goes under. "We see the same reaction from people in the coal country of Appalachia and the timber lands of the Pacific Northwest," says Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club. "They may criticize the corporations doing the resource extraction, but they still want the extraction to continue because it's the only jobs they know. The only way to approach these folks with integrity is to offer them a prosperous alternative. If you support a drilling moratorium, which the Sierra Club does, you also have to support a massive shift toward green jobs."

Plotting a green energy future for Louisiana, however, has been too daunting a task for most environmental groups. "Our side hasn't made a blueprint for Louisiana because this state is seen as so pro–oil and gas," observes Jerome Ringo, a former Louisiana oil worker who has been chair of the National Wildlife Federation and president of the Apollo Alliance. "To be honest, I doubt Louisiana will ever get off oil completely. But we do need to diversify our energy mix. We need to think about where our state goes ten years from now and invest in the green jobs of the future."

But Louisiana can surprise you. Who knew that this petrostate boasts by far the strongest solar tax credit in the country? Passed in 2007, the 50 percent credit cuts the cost of installing a solar system in half. Combine that with Obama's 30 percent federal tax credit and a Louisiana homeowner gets an 80 percent discount to go solar and live off the grid—not a bad choice in a region where storms regularly knock out the conventional power supply.

Even parts of the Louisiana business community—long a bastion of the oil and gas industry—may be seeing the light. With great fanfare, Greater New Orleans, Inc. in May launched its GreenN.O. coalition, which recognizes "the double bottom line of diversifying the economy while sustaining the environment." A study by the global consulting firm McKinsey estimates that pursuing sustainable business opportunities could create 90,000 jobs in Louisiana. Beth Galante, executive director of the New Orleans office of the nonprofit Global Green USA, sees this shift within the business community as "winning a major battle in the war" to sway local public opinion. "To get a chamber of commerce that is dominated by one of the most conservative oil and gas industries in the country to invest time and money in green energy is huge," she argues. "The political philosophy of many Americans, especially in the South, is that whatever makes money is good. This will help people realize there are great opportunities in green energy."

Great opportunities but also great challenges. It's not only apoliticals like Captain Pete who oppose Obama's moratorium. The legislator who sponsored the solar tax credit (and numerous other green energy measures), State Senator Nick Gautreaux, condemns the ban. So does Representative Charlie Melancon, the Democrat hoping to oust Republican David Vitter from his Senate seat in November. Melancon's district is ground zero for the BP disaster—he broke down weeping during a Congressional hearing while describing the devastation of its ecosystems, jobs and way of life—but a great many jobs in his district derive from the oil and gas industry.

A blanket moratorium on new deepwater drilling may not be the best policy to pursue in the wake of the BP disaster.

It may be shocking to read in *The Nation*, but a blanket moratorium on new deepwater drilling may not be the best policy to pursue in the wake of the BP disaster. No state in the union is more addicted to oil than Louisiana; the oil and gas industry is responsible for roughly 25 percent of the state's economic activity. If you abruptly cut off a hardened heroin addict, you can kill him; there is a reason physicians prescribe methadone rather than cold turkey. Louisiana absolutely needs to kick its oil habit; but it must do so through a planned, orderly transition or it will not work.

The transition must begin immediately, however, because the oil is running out. This fact is not much known or acknowledged in Louisiana, to put it mildly, but it comes from a source that even Chris John, president of the Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association (and a former Louisiana Congressman), concedes is a world-class "expert."

Matthew Simmons, an investment banker, has operated at the highest levels of the oil industry for more than thirty-five years. No liberal tree-hugger, he briefed vice presidential candidate Dick Cheney during the 2000 campaign. In 2004, in a remarkable feat of investigation, Simmons analyzed hundreds of obscure engineering reports to reveal that Saudi Arabia's oil reserves, commonly assumed to be all but inexhaustible, were much smaller than claimed and were declining precipitously. Simmons's book, *Twilight in the Desert*, made him a leading proponent of "peak oil"—the theory that humanity has now extracted half of the earth's oil and large future production increases are unlikely. At first derided as fringe, peak oil is

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now an open secret among specialists. "The battle is over, the peakists have won," James Schlesinger, the former energy and defense secretary, said in 2007.

Simmons says the BP disaster demonstrates that "we're out of viable oil in the Gulf of Mexico." The remaining oil can be reached only with "ultra-deep vertical wells" that extend more than 18,000 feet under the sea floor—even deeper than BP was drilling. Chris John counters that companies have spent $8 billion since 2007 to lease deepwater fields in the gulf that "contain huge finds." Simmons, however, doubts such oil can be recovered, explaining, "The pressures and temperatures are enormous down there. BP's blowout preventer was state of the art, but it wasn't designed for that depth. It could handle 15,000 pounds of pressure per square inch, but it confronted probably 40,000 to 60,000. We just can't do this kind of drilling anymore."

"We should leave oil before it leaves us," a statement the chief economist of the International Energy Agency made in 2008, encapsulates the challenge facing Louisiana. Yet even proponents of green energy warn that launching a direct assault on oil is not the way to go.

The reason Louisiana's legislature passed the extraordinary solar tax credit is precisely that "it wasn't a threat to oil and gas," says Wade Byrd, a former official with the state's natural resources department who helped draft the bill. State Senator Gautreaux, who sponsored the bill, implicitly concurs: "A lot of solar companies wanted to testify in support, but I said no because that would draw attention. That bill passed with one minute left in the [legislative] session, and I think it did because nobody lobbied for or against it, so it was inconspicuous."

Even proponents of green energy warn that launching a direct assault against oil is not the way to go.

The results have been impressive, though. "In two years, we went from having a handful of solar companies in Louisiana to having more than a hundred," Gautreaux says. "The biggest installer of solar systems has a backlog of more than a year." And solar's momentum will likely accelerate, thanks to a second victory by Byrd and Gautreaux. In 2009 the legislature approved their call for solar financing districts, which allow municipalities to sell bonds to cover the up-front costs of installing solar systems—often the biggest hurdle for property owners who want to go solar. The owners repay the municipality over time. "If you combine solar financing districts with the 50 percent tax credit, the cost just plummets," says Gautreaux.

Louisiana could reap similar benefits with wind, geothermal, biomass and other alternative energy sources, advocates say, if it joins the twenty-nine other states with renewable portfolio standards. An RPS, as the standard is known, requires electricity providers to supply a stipulated percentage of a state's power from renewable sources by a certain date. Illinois, for example, requires 25 percent renewables by 2025; California, 20 percent by the end of 2010. The idea is to encourage private investment in renewables by assuring an ongoing market.

The Louisiana Public Service Commission took a step in this direction on June 23, when it authorized a pilot program to create up to 350 megawatts of renewable electricity generation within the next three years. Forest Bradley-Wright of the Alliance for Affordable Energy, the leading green consumers organization in Louisiana, calls the vote "a positive step." But he urges the commission to take the next step and establish an RPS that is mandatory, ambitious and includes only genuine renewable sources (an earlier draft RPS had defined nuclear power and "advanced coal technologies" as renewables).

But Entergy, the electric utility that is the only Fortune 500 firm headquartered in New Orleans, opposes a mandatory RPS. Wayne Leonard, Entergy's CEO, has long urged putting a price on carbon, a stance critics attribute to the company's heavy reliance on nuclear power. But Leonard argues that a mandatory RPS would actually retard the fight against global warming by forcing expensive renewable energy into production while leaving coal-fired power plants—the largest single source of US greenhouse gas emissions—untouched. Bradley-Wright responds that an RPS says nothing about removing existing power plants from supply; it only mandates the creation of new, renewable sources. Besides, he adds, the real answer is to increase energy efficiency, which could reduce Louisiana's electricity demand by 30 to 50 percent, thereby making coal and other dirty energy sources unnecessary. Meanwhile, Byrd and Gautreaux challenge the claim by Entergy's vice president for regulatory affairs, Mark Kleehammer, that Louisiana lacks good enough solar resources to produce competitively priced electricity. "Louisiana averages five hours of sun a day," Byrd says. "Germany averages four, and Germany has a strong solar program."

As Louisiana examines the potential of better energy efficiency, it has the good fortune not to be starting from zero. Byrd drafted efficiency codes for commercial buildings that were implemented in 1995; a residential code passed in 2007. But those codes should be strengthened, he says, and integrated with renewable-energy advances to create zero-energy buildings. Buoyed by $20 million of investment from HRI Properties, a national housing developer based in New Orleans, Byrd aims to construct 250 zero-energy houses for low-income residents in Louisiana—"hopefully all in one place, to show municipalities what's possible," he says. Equally important is to reform utility regulation. At the moment, Entergy and other electricity providers in Louisiana face the same perverse incentive structure that prevails in most of the country: their profits increase according to how much electricity they sell. If Louisiana instead emulated California and rewarded utilities for reducing rather than increasing electricity consumption, both the environment and the utilities would benefit.

Efficiency is also the key to reducing the burden oil and gas production imposes on Louisiana, says Amory Lovins, the co-founder and chief scientist of the Rocky Mountain Institute

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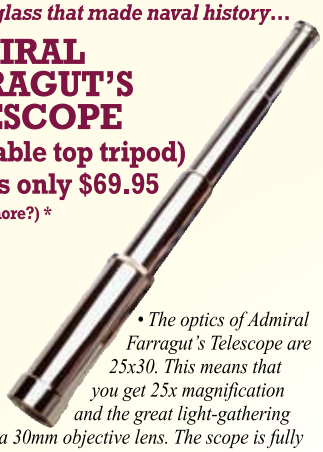

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in Colorado. The vast majority of oil produced or processed in Louisiana—and bear in mind, much of the latter is imported from abroad—is not consumed within the state. It ends up in cars, trucks and furnaces across the United States. Thus reducing America's consumption of oil is a prerequisite to reducing Louisiana's reliance on the oil industry. By far the fastest way to do that, argues Lovins, is "efficiency, efficiency, efficiency." In his book *Winning the Oil Endgame*, he outlines a strategy to end oil imports by 2040 and kick oil entirely by 2050. His strategy relies in part on expanding government procurement of super-efficient vehicles to drive down market prices of same. He also advocates so-called feebates: buyers of more fuel-efficient models in a given vehicle class would get rebates, financed by fees paid by buyers of less efficient models. France introduced feebates in 2008, says Lovins, and sales of less efficient vehicles fell by 42 percent while sales of efficient ones rose by 50 percent. "Louisiana may not be the best place to pilot something like this," he says, "but it'd be a good place."

Transforming Louisiana's energy system is not an impossible dream but an economic and environmental imperative, not least because the state's oil is fast disappearing. Louisiana can't turn green overnight, which is all the more reason to get started right away. It's only fair that the federal government assist in this task, for the nation as a whole has demanded the oil and gas Louisiana has supplied all these years. But primary leadership belongs at the state and local levels, shared among activist, business and political figures engaged in constructive dialogue with one another and the public at large. The solar tax credit and other innovations already undertaken show there is an appetite and capacity in Louisiana for blazing a new path.

Winning over regular people like Captain Pete and his dock mates is essential. That requires plain talk that respects and broadens local sensibilities, as well as bold actions that deliver concrete benefits—in a word, jobs. "Liberals like to talk about green jobs, but conservatives don't like that term," says State Senator Gautreaux. "I'm neither liberal nor conservative, so I just say 'good-paying jobs.' Why do jobs have to have a color?" ■

The Spill's Silver Lining?

The BP disaster could be the catalyst for an invigorated environmental movement.

by CHRISTINE MacDONALD

On the steamy hot morning of June 30, the Sierra Club's new executive director, Michael Brune, stood on the Mall in Washington, surrounded by an estimated 10,000 American flags that had been hammered into the parched and scraggly-looking grass by a few dozen members of the club, the oldest and largest grassroots environmental group in the country.

EDWIN VAZQUEZ

Brune and his fellow demonstrators were there to call for an end to America's dependence on oil within the next twenty years. The flags, which spelled out "Freedom From Oil," represented "tens of thousands of Americans who have watched the BP disaster in the gulf and want to make sure it never happens again," Brune declared. He called for bold leadership from President Barack Obama, who, at that moment, just happened to be flying overhead in his Marine One helicopter. The president was headed to a town hall–style meeting in Racine, Wisconsin, to address a subject that routinely receives more attention than environmental woes—the economy.

But the environment has commanded the president's attention, and that of the media and general public, ever since BP's Deepwater Horizon rig exploded on April 20, killing eleven workers and sending millions of gallons of crude oil cascading into the Gulf of Mexico. The onslaught of media images—oil-soaked ospreys, burning turtles and other dead and dying wildlife—has also highlighted the daunting environmental challenges facing the country. One potentially positive effect of the disaster, however, has been a resurgence of hope among environmental leaders that Congress and the president may finally be willing not simply to talk about moving the United States off fossil fuels and tackling climate change but to do something about it—or at least, that official Washington may now be more susceptible to pressure from activists pursuing that goal.

"People are watching oil spewing out into the gulf on their computers and television sets. They are desperate to help, and it's not just the classic greenies who live in San Francisco," says Brune, who lives in the Bay Area, where the Club is headquartered. "The bigger challenge is one of confidence. People don't necessarily believe that we can do it. There is a very defeatist attitude that permeates the national conversation on this topic." Though, he adds, "we actually do have very real-world solutions for getting off oil, but we don't yet have politicians and corporate leaders who have the political will."

The Sierra Club hopes to change that by applying the same tactics it used to win perhaps the greatest victory yet achieved in the battle against climate change. Over the past few years, the Club and its state chapters have spearheaded a nationwide grass-

Christine MacDonald, a freelance journalist based in Washington, DC, is the author of Green Inc.: An Environmental Insider Reveals How a Good Cause Has Gone Bad *(Lyons Press).*

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roots movement that has established a de facto national moratorium on the construction of coal-fired power plants. Uniting environmentalists, local public officials, health professionals, youth groups (especially at colleges and universities) and others, the Beyond Coal campaign used lobbying, demonstrations, legal challenges and other activist tools to block 129 of some 200 planned coal plants around the country. Now the Sierra Club will use the same methods against oil, employing "all means" at its disposal, Brune says.

Like the coal fight, the Freedom From Oil campaign will emphasize the full costs of producing and consuming oil—local air and water pollution; rising fatalities from asthma, heart disease and other ailments; intensifying climate change; and the prospect of more catastrophic accidents as companies drill in ever more remote and risky areas to extract the earth's dwindling oil reserves.

The Sierra Club's new campaign also borrows some elements from a long-running one at the Rainforest Action Network, the scrappy activist outfit Brune led before taking the Club's helm in March. Brune wants to pitch as big a tent as possible, attracting labor, youth, churches, sports leaders and—the big question mark—the mainstream environmental organizations headquartered in Washington, several of which run competing initiatives to promote clean energy.

Dale Bryk, director of the Air and Energy Program at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), says that work by her organization and others means that technology and policy options are well developed but that the harder part is getting the public's attention and convincing elected officials to take on the oil industry and its legions of lobbyists. "We have a heavy lift," Bryk says. "The industry has a lot of money and lots of lobbyists." (The oil and gas industry spent $38 million on lobbying in the first four months of 2010, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.)

But most green leaders agree that the BP disaster has created a historic opportunity. "Largely, people are pulling in the same direction on oil. It's been a unifying issue" for the environmental movement, says Phil Radford, executive director of Greenpeace USA.

Still, disagreement remains on how to move forward, and even what "forward" means. While the Sierra Club is directly challenging Big Oil, other groups are focused more narrowly on outlawing offshore drilling and enacting reforms to other types of oil drilling. Meanwhile, so-called Big Green groups—such as the NRDC, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), the National Wildlife Federation and others with the most brand-name recognition, the deepest pockets and closest ties to Washington deal-makers—are intensely focused on a last-ditch effort to pass a climate and energy bill before Congress's August recess.

"Right now, there is the best opportunity for a president to lead on this topic that any president has had in a decade," says EDF president Fred Krupp, who along with eight other national groups sent an open letter to Obama on July 2 beseeching him to draw up his own climate legislation blueprint.

"He's done more than any president in history, but if he doesn't put forth his own package that he wants the Senate to pass, it could lead nowhere," says Krupp. "Will [the upcoming climate legislation] make us energy independent? No. Will it solve the climate problem? No. Is that a reason not to do it? No. Now is the time to get something done."

The lack of consensus on what should be done, and how, reflects a longstanding and growing divide within the environmental movement. Groups like EDF have spent decades cultivating ties to corporate leaders and politicians in anticipation of this summer's climate change showdown in the Senate. Meanwhile, many local activists and more aggressive national environmental groups think the Big Greens have compromised too much and want to break with their "inside the Beltway" strategy.

The Tucson-based Center for Biological Diversity (CBD), for example, charges that many of the Big Green groups are not only out of step with the country's needs but tone-deaf to the public outrage over the gulf spill and the political openings it has created. "Here is a moment when you can strike hard and fast and really affect policy. This focus on [passing a climate] bill is damaging to the environmental movement, especially when it's not a very strong bill," says Kierán Suckling, CBD's executive director. "To divert attention away from this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shut down deep-sea drilling is really a shame."

The Sierra Club's Freedom From Oil campaign will employ 'all means' at its disposal, according to executive director Michael Brune.

Mainstream groups' determination to pass a climate bill has at times taken them down unlikely paths. NRDC Action Fund, for instance, launched TV ads this past spring targeting Democrats like Bill Nelson of Florida and Robert Menendez of New Jersey, who opposed climate legislation sponsored by Senators John Kerry and Joe Lieberman because they regarded its position on offshore drilling as too lenient. The ads featured footage of the burning BP oil rig, accompanied by a voiceover: "Congress won't pass a clean-energy climate plan to cut our addiction to dirty fuels because Congress is still addicted to big oil influence. It's time for politicians to break their addiction, so we can break ours."

And coastal state lawmakers haven't been the only ones unwilling to accept the White House's trade-off of increased offshore drilling in return for a climate bill. The CBD, Sierra Club and other members of the more aggressive wing of the environmental movement also declined to support the Kerry-Lieberman bill, balking at its offshore drilling provision, among other things.

The move not to endorse the bill was one of the first big decisions made by the Club after Brune took over as executive director from longtime leader Carl Pope. The Club also declined to sign on to the joint July 2 letter to Obama, opting instead to send a more sharply worded one of its own.

Disappointed that Obama hasn't been "twisting arms and cracking heads to get a strong climate bill," Brune says the Sierra Club's support for the president may not last forever. "I

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think Obama needs to be reminded that he shouldn't take the environmental community for granted," he warns. "Millions of young people helped put him in office, and they want what he promised: a shift to clean-energy solutions that will fight climate change and create good jobs in a green economy." Environmental insiders speculate that if the Club, which has a history of working with Democratic lawmakers, turned on them, it could set off a chain of defections among smaller groups increasingly disenchanted with the timidity of the president and the Democratic Congress.

The Sierra Club's new campaign, however, is by no means assured of success. Unlike the Beyond Coal fight, the anti-oil campaign must be waged on many different fields of battle—not just the hyper-local front of one very large coal power plant at a time. "Oil is a tricky one," says Rebecca Tarbotton, Rainforest Action Network's interim executive director. "Our dependence on oil is rooted in the actions of millions of individuals across the country, not just a few giant corporations. But the public has an unprecedented lack of trust at the moment for Big Coal, Big Oil and Big Banks," and, she adds, "the Sierra Club is a big stage."

But is it big enough? CBD's Suckling does not believe the Sierra Club can shut down the oil industry without a united environmental movement, including support from the Big Green groups—which, despite the simmering discontent at the grassroots, continue to serve as its official voice. Those groups, he says, "have so much power that if they are willing to endorse anything less" than the rapid end of the country's oil dependence, "the political system will gravitate toward them."

Other grassroots activists, like Utah monkey-wrencher Tim DeChristopher, Andy Mahler of the Heartwood environmental network and Native Forest Council president Tim Hermach, are skeptical that the country can be weaned off oil without a much wider societal shift. "What we are talking about is going to war with the richest and most powerful corporations in the world that have a stranglehold on our government," says DeChristopher, who made headlines in 2008 when he posed as a bidder at an auction for oil and gas leases on more than 110,000 acres of federal land, winning thirteen leases before officials caught on and halted the auction. "There would have to be a movement willing to raise more hell than the oil industry, and we don't have that right now," says DeChristopher, who has started a grassroots group aimed at building just such a civil rights–style climate movement as he awaits trial on the federal auction disruption charges. "If we won't do that," he says, "we're asking our politicians to show a higher level of courage and commitment than we have shown."

Brune says the Sierra Club is undaunted by the challenge. "We're not kidding ourselves. [This country has] been talking about getting off oil since Nixon, and it has not yet succeeded. But today we have certain advantages: we only have to try to convince six automakers and one decision-maker in the White House. There are choke points, where one important leader can make historic decisions."

"When you set a bold and ambitious goal, it inspires people to work with you," he says. ■

How to Survive the Crisis (Organize!)

At the US Social Forum, activists discuss how to meet basic needs—and take on the system.

by BEN EHRENREICH

Detroit

Amid the austere architecture of collapse that describes most of this city's East Side, one block of Heidelberg Street stands out. Brightly colored polka dots adorn the houses. Shopping carts and crucified teddy bears climb the trunk of a limbless tree. Faces with multiple rows of teeth grin forth from sheets of plywood, some of them inscribed with the cryptic words "God," "War," "Police" and "1967"—the year of the uprising of discontent (riot, if you prefer) that left forty-three people dead and more than 1,000 injured.

ED ABRAMS

The Heidelberg Project, as it is called, is the creation of one Tyree Guyton, who with help from his family and later from other local artists gathered cast-off junk in a cast-off city and turned it into something at once painful and beautiful. At its best, the US Social Forum, the gathering of activists and organizers convened three miles away in downtown, felt a bit like Guyton's polka-dotted vision: some scarred, slender hope emerging from the ashes, anomie and oil-slicked debris of American political life.

From the June 22 march that kicked off the Forum—at which a diverse crowd of several thousand drummed and danced their way through Detroit's empty streets—to the more than 1,000 workshops spread around town, the mood was relentlessly cheerful. For five packed days, activists who are embattled all year long could be happy for one another's company. Their high spirits, though, were everywhere shadowed by a multitude of crises that extend far beyond mass unemployment and foreclosures. Outside the glass walls of the riverside Cobo convention center were two wars, a rising know-nothing movement, politicians who respond to growing poverty by cutting assistance to the poor, a virulent racism spreading north from the Southern border, an entire

Ben Ehrenreich, a journalist and novelist based in Los Angeles, is the author of The Suitors.

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coastline laid waste by corporate plunder and a putatively progressive president who misses few opportunities to kneel before the wealthy.

Detroit's was the second US Social Forum. The first was held in Atlanta in 2007 as an extension of the World Social Forum, the convening of the global left held annually since 2001, most often in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The idea was to provide a space where organizers and activists on the grassroots left could exchange ideas and tactics and collaborate to craft a broader strategy. "The movement in the US is at such a low level," says Jerome Scott, one of the key organizers of the 2007 conference, "that we can't afford to pull together all this effort and not have it be about movement building."

The various national crises appear to be helping out. About 18,000 people showed up in Detroit, 7,000 more than turned out in Atlanta. This despite a near-complete media blackout; Venezuela's TeleSur and Al Jazeera English were the only major news organizations in attendance. Political bents ranged from progressive Democrat to Trotskyite. Unions and major liberal nonprofits—the media face of what gets called the American left—were largely absent, which meant that attendees were that much less likely to be white or even middle-class. Detroit's crowd was by all accounts far younger than Atlanta's—surely a good sign. Together, the Forum-goers formed a snapshot of the state of grassroots activism in the age of Obama, and of the full-spectrum emergency to which activists have been forced to respond.

Detroit was selected for the Forum as much for its symbolic value as for its deep history of social movements, of defiantly making do in the absence of even the most basic institutional support. "Detroit has always been a city of resistance, and we need to support that," says Jerome Scott, who as a member of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers helped lead a historic wildcat strike at Chrysler's Forge plant in 1973. "But we have to let people realize," he adds, "that you can see the future in Detroit unless we build a movement to prevent it."

That future is mighty bleak. The city that once symbolized the affluence and strength of the American working class now stands more than half abandoned. Detroit's population has shriveled from a midcentury high of nearly 2 million to under 800,000. The mayor's office estimates that as much as 44 percent of the population is unemployed. (The official jobless rate is 24 percent.) Some neighborhoods have been so thoroughly devastated by abandonment and neglect that they resemble the post-Katrina Lower Ninth Ward. But no storm surge passed over Detroit, just the everyday logic of late twentieth-century capitalism: profits chasing profits, industry on the run in search of ever cheaper labor, public functions privatized when they're not summarily killed.

Detroit is facing the same crisis-induced austerities as most American cities and towns—the city is planning to shutter forty-five public schools and just narrowly averted closing seventy-seven parks—but hard times hit harder here. At Forum workshops, local activists talked about issues not usually associated with cities in North America: food security and access to potable water. One of the opening events was a rally in front of the Detroit Edison building to demand an end to utility shutoffs. Eleven people died in house fires here last winter, trying to stay warm after their gas and electricity had been turned off.

At one workshop on urban agriculture—a movement for which Detroit has lately won national renown—members of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network (DBCFSN) and a predominantly white urban farming group called Earthworks discussed their efforts to navigate complex and often painful racial relations in order to work together. It was a near-perfect model of the sort of dynamic and intensely practical networking that the US Social Forum was organized to foster. The DBCFSN has gone from tilling a quarter-acre lot four years ago to inking a ten-year deal with the city to rent two acres of parkland for a dollar a year. Another local group, the Greening of Detroit, has gone from supplying seeds and transplants to eighty gardens in 2003 to 1,300 gardens this year. Urban agriculture, Ashley Atkinson of the Greening of Detroit says, "is just really blowing up in Detroit. We're really finding synergy."

At workshops, local activists talked about issues not usually associated with American cities—food security and access to potable water.

But growing your own produce doesn't mean the same thing in Detroit as it might in Park Slope. No one in the room was talking about heirloom varietals or the joys of slow food. The DBCFSN was formed, board president Kwamena Mensah explains, "to address the food insecurity in Detroit's black community." Put simply, people needed to eat. Even for the shrinking number of Detroiters who have the money to eat well, there is no longer a single major grocery store within the city limits. A fifth of Detroit residents do not have access to a car that might carry them to a suburban Trader Joe's. What they do have is land. The shrinking population, according to Atkinson, has left Detroit with 50,000 publicly owned empty lots, perhaps twice that many if you count abandoned land in private hands, and still more on the way after the current wave of foreclosures is done. Sprawling lots with waist-high weeds have rendered parts of the city almost pastoral.

Detroit has a history of urban agriculture dating back to the depression of the 1890s, when Mayor Hazen Pingree staved off famine by persuading private landowners to allow the poor to cultivate vegetables on their unused lots. As bad times took hold again in the mid-1970s, Mayor Coleman Young instituted a Farm-A-Lot program, through which the city distributed tools and seedlings to residents. It met the same fate as many other public programs. In the early summer of 2002, Atkinson says, she began to hear from residents panicking because the city would not return their calls. "It was already late in the season, and they had nothing."

The movement thus developed, if you'll excuse the pun, from the ground up. This time it was residents organizing themselves

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and imposing their priorities on government—a rare occurrence in the current democratic order. In 2008 the DBCFSN pushed officials to adopt a citywide food security policy and establish a standing Food Policy Council within the municipal bureaucracy. "Don't look at us and say, Poor Detroit, no grocery stores," says Monica White, a DBCFSN board member who helped run the urban agriculture workshop with Mensah. "People here are coming up with their own solutions to social problems."

White's enthusiasm was at once contagious and painful. The DBCFSN's efforts are about more than keeping Detroiters in tomatoes and kale—they're about self-determination, about establishing control over basic resources. It was hard to miss the irony, though, that in a city where workers once demanded control over the means of production of one of the largest industries in the world, residents are now fighting for the right to grow their own food.

In the hallways and in workshops, activists discussed transgender rights and media strategy, grassroots responses to climate change, police brutality, the BP disaster. There was a depressing near-silence, though, on America's ongoing wars. Far more workshops were devoted to Palestine and Haiti than to Afghanistan and Iraq. It was a curious omission, given that the last large US social movement coalesced around opposition to the Vietnam War.

Almost no one at the Forum had any expectations of Obama, our most celebrated community activist. His name was rarely mentioned.

The evolution of one local group may help explain the silence. In 2002 Abayomi Azikiwe was one of the founding members of the Michigan Emergency Committee Against War and Injustice (MECAWI), which came together during the buildup to the war in Iraq. "We realized," Azikiwe says, "that the war was tied into declining social conditions in cities like Detroit." One of the group's slogans was "Money for our cities, not for war."

In 2007, though, the mortgage crisis began to crash over Detroit, and MECAWI began calling for a statewide moratorium on foreclosures. It soon morphed into a new coalition called Moratorium NOW! It fought in the courts to prevent individual foreclosures and evictions, picketed mortgage lenders that were refusing to modify loans and lobbied state legislators. When the auto industry began laying off thousands, Azikiwe says, "we moved to advocating for full employment, because you see the connection between foreclosures and unemployment." Then came the announcements of school closings and teacher layoffs, and the group added saving public education to an already full agenda. The war, says Azikiwe, has been overshadowed "because the economic crisis is so live right now." Of the eight workshops that MECAWI/Moratorium NOW! sponsored at the Forum, only one dealt explicitly with the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

If many at the Social Forum were talking about community self-determination, others were fighting for still more basic forms of survival. For activists from Arizona, the connection between militarism abroad and deepening troubles at home was not at all abstract. Octavio Fuentes came from Tucson with a contingent of young immigrants' rights activists and a story to tell.

In early 2006, planning to stay for a single year to pay off some family debts, Fuentes took a job with KBR. He ended up working for the company for four years, stationed mainly in Iraq and Afghanistan. On trips home, he says, he began to notice disturbing confluences between the state in which he had grown up and occupied Iraq. Driving south to Sonora to see his mother's family, he spotted the same white "eye in the sky" surveillance blimps he was used to seeing hovering above Baghdad, and heard the familiar buzz of low-flying unmanned drones. Homeland Security agents drove the same Humvees and carried the same military weaponry he was accustomed to seeing in war zones abroad, and, except for the different uniforms, ICE checkpoints on southern Arizona highways felt no different from the ones he had to pass through to enter forward operating bases in Iraq.

In late 2009, as Fuentes put it, "I decided to either go home to do what I really wanted to do, or I was going to go crazy and/or die." KBR, he says, tried to keep him on, and offered him a position at home. He could even stay in Arizona—KBR was bidding to build "new internment facilities" in the Southwest. "As I was leaving," Fuentes says, "this war machine was offering me work in the war against immigrants."

Instead, he began working with the Tucson-based Coalición de Derechos Humanos and shooting video for the documentary collective Pan Left Productions, which screened several short films at the Forum. Well before the April passage of Arizona's SB 1070, which requires police to demand proof of citizenship from anyone they suspect might be undocumented, activists in that state had their hands full. Border militarization has accelerated under Obama, who in March ordered another 1,200 National Guard troops to the border. Nationwide, deportations have risen to 1,000 a day. In much of Arizona, SB 1070 will only formalize prevalent law enforcement practices. Although the law takes effect July 29, undocumented migrants, says Fuentes, were afraid to leave their homes even to buy groceries or attend mass before that date. "These are people who were living in the shadows already and have gone even deeper."

Almost no one at the Forum had any expectations of Barack Obama, our most celebrated community activist. The president's name was rarely mentioned. But Fuentes, 35, was heartened by the growing youth movement in Arizona, where thousands have repeatedly walked out of school and filled the streets to protest SB 1070 and a more recent bill that bans the teaching of ethnic studies in the public schools. When he was arrested in an impromptu May occupation of the state education offices in Tucson, four of the fifteen arrested with him were under 18. Arizona activists plan larger actions for July 29 and ask people from all over the country to join them in the streets of Phoenix—leaving all identifying documents behind. "We want to over-

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whelm the system," says Lynda Cruz of Derechos Humanos.

When I ask Fuentes if, given his experience, he isn't discouraged by the enormity of the military, financial and bureaucratic forces aligned against a largely impoverished and disenfranchised immigrant population, he answers obliquely. "The only thing we have left," he says, "is our desire to live with dignity."

Asked about his long-term vision, even Fuentes—whose battle couldn't be fought without directly confronting the state and the vast nexus of corporate players—begins talking about urban gardening and community self-determination, about "trying to develop an alternative world within the world we live in." This same tension played itself out in various ways all over the Social Forum: a left driven to build a movement capable of challenging the twin immensities of global capital and the security state, and at the same time to retreat from the whole crumbling mess into communities capable of sustaining themselves.

They are on one level the same battle. The old models of organizing that once made Detroit strong have been steadily losing ground since the 1970s, which is, not coincidentally, when Detroit's decline took hold and when neoliberal economic policies began to reshape the world. When the workplace becomes an agglomeration of transitory, competing independent contractors and suburban nomadism replaces neighborhood bonds, where do you begin to forge alliances?

Beholden only to dues-paying members and to the continued profits of the industries they organize, traditional labor unions lost interest in these questions long ago. In the absence of a draft, the war didn't spur a movement either; war just became the norm. And the economic crises have largely pushed people deeper into their lonely, vigilantly guarded corners—the Tea Party's fellowship of the individually aggrieved. So it makes sense that for all their variety, many of the efforts at the Social Forum actually share a single goal. Whether they were organizing workers' centers for the unemployed in Rust Belt Indiana or establishing urban gardens and immigrant mutual aid groups in Oakland, most activists were also consciously fighting to rebuild relationships that might form the basis for any kind of broader solidarity. "That's what needs to be built back up, and a community-based movement is capable of building it," says Elena Herreda, founder of Detroit's Centro Obrero, one of the five local "anchor groups" that organized the Social Forum.

It would be easy to get discouraged by such admissions. Not only do we need to build a social movement powerful enough to shift the status quo; we need to reconstruct the basic human relationships from which a social movement might grow—and in a hurry. But almost anything is better than sitting at home watching streaming video of oil flowing into the gulf while waiting for your last unemployment check, for sheriff's deputies to bang on the door with eviction papers, for ICE to barge in with shackles and cuffs, for the power company to finally cut the electricity so you can't even watch the oil keep on spilling. So take your cues from the Motor City and be encouraged despite it all. Be unabashedly earnest if you are able. Just get out there and fight. ■

The Trouble With Amazon

It's big, cheap and convenient. But does the online bookseller really serve readers' interests?

by COLIN ROBINSON

Jeff Bezos loves numbers. In a speech in May to graduates at his alma mater, Princeton University, he recounted a childhood memory: when, driving with his grandmother, a heavy smoker, he calculated by how many years her addiction would reduce her life expectancy. Announcing the result from the back seat, he expected praise for his deft math. But his grandmother just burst into tears.

ED ABRAMS

The Amazon founder's geeky obsession with numbers evidently formed early, and despite the glimmer of discomfort revealed by his Princeton anecdote, his fervently quantitative take on the world clearly still predominates. In a letter accompanying the 2009 Amazon annual report, for instance, he sets out a mind-boggling 452 goals for the company in the coming year. The word "revenue" is mentioned only eight times, yet revenue growth is central to the Amazon story. Expanding both internationally and across other products—nonbook sales represent 75 percent of total Amazon turnover—Amazon's global business has increased fifteenfold over the past decade, 28 percent last year alone. Sales in 2009 topped $24.5 billion. To put that in perspective, in 2008 total sales by all US bookstores were less than $17 billion. Amazon is today, by some margin, the largest bookseller in the world.

Of all the goals in the report, Bezos proudly points out, no fewer than 360 deal directly with customer needs. The customer has always been king in the Bezos ethos, and the formula for keeping the king happy is straightforward. "Amazon gives the customers what they want: low prices, vast selection and extreme convenience," he told a shareholders' meeting. On these terms, Amazon's success is stellar. It has more than 2 million titles on sale; bestselling books are routinely discounted by 50 percent or more; and it ranked first in *BusinessWeek*'s "customer service champs" awards last year. But dig beneath the surface of the

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numbers and a more complex picture emerges, one suggesting that, stats notwithstanding, readers and writers may ultimately not be best served by Amazon's race to become the biggest, cheapest and most convenient bookseller around.

Amazon has not grown to where it is today by being touchy-feely. Sure, it adopted the informal trappings that characterized many of the new technology start-ups of the 1990s. But if Bezos's first desk at the company was an old door on trestles, the business conducted from behind it has been as ruthless as anything he encountered in his previous gig as a Wall Street broker. Soon after Amazon's launch in 1995, Bezos told his employees that he wanted a place that was both "intense and friendly" but that "if you ever had to give up 'friendly' in order to have 'intense,' we would do that."

This hard-nosed approach has not endeared Amazon to publishers, who have consistently felt the pressure of the company's intensity, especially when it comes to setting terms. In researching this article, I uncovered widespread resentment about the aggressive way Amazon pursues its objectives, matched only by dread of being publicly identified as a critic of publishing's largest customer. "They have no sense of collegiality," complained one publisher, who asked not to be identified. "They behave like pigs," said another, his voice dropping as he checked around to see if anyone was within earshot.

'Two guys from Amazon came to see me. They said that the company was watching what we were doing.' —publisher Dennis Loy Johnson

(Disclosure: the new publishing company with which I am involved, OR Books, does not deal with Amazon. We sell direct to customers, channeling money that would otherwise go on discount and distribution to extensive promotion, primarily on the Internet.)

Dennis Loy Johnson, co-publisher of the Brooklyn-based independent Melville House, is one of the few publishers who have dared to speak openly about Amazon's bullying. His story is far from atypical. In 2004 a representative of the retailer contacted Melville's distributor demanding an additional discount. Such payments are illegal under antitrust law, which precludes selling at different prices to different customers. Large retailers circumvent this restriction by disguising the extra discount under the rubric of "co-op," money paid to the bookseller for promotional services, often notional. In this case the distributor did not bother with such niceties, describing what Amazon was after as "kickback."

Johnson resisted Amazon's pressure and complained to *Publishers Weekly* about what he saw as the retailer's capo-like tactics. What happened next evidently still rankles. "I was at the Book Expo in New York and two guys from Amazon came to see me. They said that the company was watching what we were doing and that they strongly advised us to get in line. I was shocked at how blatant the pressure was." Within a couple of days Johnson noticed that the buy buttons for his books had been taken off Amazon's site, making Melville's titles unavailable.

In the end Johnson, faced with an offer it was nigh impossible to refuse, agreed to the co-op. His books' buy buttons were reinstated. Today Amazon is Melville House's biggest customer, and though Johnson still regularly flays the company on his popular publishing blog Moby Lives, he also concedes that it is highly effective at bookselling: "They make buying so easy. It's impossible to resist."

Another man who recently lost his Amazon buy buttons is John Sargent, head of Macmillan, the US arm of German book giant Holtzbrinck, home to many authors familiar to *Nation* readers, including Naomi Klein, Noam Chomsky and Barbara Ehrenreich. In January Sargent confronted Amazon over its insistence on setting the prices of e-books it sold on its site, generally at under $10. This was a concern throughout an industry worried that low prices of electronic versions would undermine profits from printed books and generally lower the perceived value of the product. Sargent informed Amazon that he wanted to move Macmillan to an "agency agreement," meaning that he, as the publisher, could price books at whatever level he chose, paying Amazon a fixed discount.

Amazon reacted with characteristic distemper: bye-bye Macmillan's buy buttons. A face-off ensued. Amazon was vehement that its stand was on behalf of customers looking for bargains. A gallery of cynics openly suspected it had more to do with securing the future of its proprietary e-book reader, the Kindle, in the face of Apple's imminent launch of the competing iPad.

Something had to give, and a few days later it did: Amazon gave in with a statement revealing contempt toward the very idea of a publisher. "We will have to capitulate," it said, "because Macmillan has a monopoly over their own titles." The company's hand had been forced by a preceding announcement that Apple had accepted an agency agreement with five of the six largest publishers. Unusual for Amazon, its suppliers had an alternative for selling their books.

It was the first time Amazon had ever given way in public on a big issue with publishers. And it may just have marked the beginning of a power shift between the retailer and its suppliers. Such realignment is long overdue, because the problems caused by Amazon's business practices extend to fundamental matters of the future of the book business and the diversity of our culture as a whole.

Take the issue of choice: when it comes to the books it stocks, Amazon makes no pretense of selectivity. Provided it carries an ISBN and isn't offensive, Amazon is happy to sell any book Joe Schmo cares to publish. "We want to make every book available—the good, the bad and the ugly," Bezos once said. Spurred on by Amazon and the growth of self-publishing companies like XLibris and Lulu, the number of new books being published has soared. According to industry statisticians Bowker, just over 172,000 titles were released in 2005. Last year

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"traditional" output had risen to 288,000 titles, a significant enough increase by itself. But adding what Bowker describes as "self-published" and "micro-niche" books, the total inflates to a staggering 1 million new titles in just twelve months.

Many would argue that the efflorescence of new publishing that Amazon has encouraged can only be a good thing, that it enriches cultural diversity and expands choice. But that picture is not so clear: a number of studies have shown that when people are offered a narrower range of options, their selections are likely to be more diverse than if they are presented with a number of choices so vast as to be overwhelming. In this situation people often respond by retreating into the security of what they already know.

As Barry Schwartz, author of *The Paradox of Choice*, explains, "When the choice set is larger, people tend to make worse choices. They choose on the basis of what's easiest to evaluate, rather than what's important to evaluate…the safe, highly marketed option usually comes out on top."

This apparent anomaly of greater choice resulting in a narrower selection finds a corollary in Amazon's use of metrics to recommend titles based on previous purchases. The algorithms at work here are highly sophisticated and are widely credited with expanding consumer choice. Yet such metric-based systems can simultaneously increase the variety of books purchased by individual customers while decreasing the overall variety of books bought by everyone. This is because, as blogger Whimsley explains, "In Internet World the customers see further, but they are all looking out from the same tall hilltop. In Offline World individual customers are standing on different, lower hilltops. They may not see as far individually, but more of the ground is visible to someone."

The loss of serendipity that comes with not knowing exactly what one is looking for is lamented by ex-Amazon editor James Marcus: "Personalization strikes me as a mixed blessing. While it gives people what they want—or what they think they want—it also engineers spontaneity out of the picture. The happy accident, the freakish discovery, ceases to exist. And that's a problem."

That sentiment is underscored by Charlie Winton, CEO of Counterpoint Press: "Shopping on Amazon is a directed experience—it works best when you know what you're looking for. But how does that help with, for instance, a first novel? When independent bookstores were in a healthier state, staff picks and hand selling could bring attention to great books people didn't know they wanted. Now that's much harder."

The shrinking of that market share has certainly been severe. The number of independent bookstores in America has more than halved in the past two decades. The pleasure of browsing shelves stocked with care and intelligence by independent owners of stores like Midnight Special in Santa Monica, Cody's in Berkeley and the Coliseum in Manhattan is only a memory. Their collapse is the byproduct of another tenet of Amazon's business philosophy: low prices are always good for customers.

In addition to regularly offering bestsellers at more than 50 percent off, Amazon offers a wide range of titles for around a third off the recommended price. Such low prices have forced its competitors to follow suit. Last October Wal-Mart declared a price war on the online retailer. As part of the offensive, the big box store announced that it would sell Stephen King's 1,074-page *Under the Dome* at just $10. Amazon promptly matched Wal-Mart's discount; the two competitors then lowered the price by another dollar, selling at nearly 75 percent off the publisher's $35 recommended retail price.

Of course, everyone loves low prices, but as with breadth of choice, the matter is more complex than it first appears. To achieve such low prices retailers must seek ever deeper discounts from publishers. A decade ago the average wholesale discount for a book was in the region of 40 percent. Today it's more like 50 percent, and for many of the large outlets it can be 60 percent or more. Amazon clearly anticipates that the trend of deeper discounts and lower prices will continue. One prominent British publisher told me his sales director returned from a visit with Amazon at which he had been forced to grant better terms. "The good news," he reported back, "is they said I don't have to go in and see them again for eighteen months."

Fewer staff and falling promotion budgets mean that books by less established authors—the 'mid-list'—receive ever shorter shrift.

Another London publisher, head of a well-known transatlantic university press, complained about the way Amazon undermined his company's efforts to sell its titles direct. "They told us, in no uncertain terms, that if we tried to match the reduced price at which they were selling our titles they would take the lower price as the basis for calculating their discount, allowing them to price-cut still further."

Blocked at every turn in their attempts to escape this relentless race to the bottom, publishers have seen their revenues fall, forcing many to make cutbacks and concentrate more on lead titles, the blockbusters that, accountants tell them, are the most profitable component of their business. Fewer staff and falling promotion budgets mean that books by less established authors—the "mid-list"—receive ever shorter shrift.

The mid-list is the place where new talent has traditionally been nurtured, where publishers can take chances on less predictable titles. "Look at books like Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* or Roberto Bolaño's *Savage Detectives*," says Paul Yamazaki, chief buyer at City Lights in San Francisco. "These are serious, sophisticated books that began life with modest expectations, but after dedicated work by the publisher and independent booksellers, they went on to reach wider audiences. This sort of publishing is under threat today."

The accumulated effect of Amazon's pricing policy, its massive volume and its metric-based recommendations system is, in fact, to diminish real choice for the consumer. Though the

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overall number of titles published each year has risen sharply, the under-resourcing of mid-list books is producing a pattern that joins an enormously attenuated tail (a tiny number of customers buying from a huge range of titles) to a Brobdingnagian head (an increasing number of purchasers buying the same few lead titles), with less and less in between. Responding to the effects of price wars last fall the American Booksellers Association warned, "If left unchecked…predatory pricing policies will devastate not only the book industry, but our collective ability to maintain a society where the widest range of ideas are always made available to the public."

Authors, too, can be added to the list of price-cutting's victims. In the fall of 2008, as the crisis of publishing began, a boss at Scribner, where I was a senior editor for two and a half years, announced at an editorial meeting that when it came to advances, "$50,000 is the new $100,000." Speaking with agents at this spring's London Book Fair, I found widespread corroboration that advances had indeed dropped precipitously.

This is partly a reflection of the overall dismal state of the market. US book sales fell by nearly 2 percent in 2009, after a drop of more than 2.8 percent the previous year. It is also related, however, to a clause in many publishers' contracts that reduces royalties paid to authors if sales are made to booksellers at a high discount, in some cases reducing the royalty by half. In this respect publisher, bookstore and customer appear to benefit from the lower price at the expense of the author. But lower advances and royalties make for less-well-researched books and an author pool increasingly populated by hobbyists rather than those whose primary qualification is the ability to write.

It's hard to see how the allure of infinite choice and rock-bottom prices conjured up by Amazon can be dispelled, but there are slivers of hope. Independent bookstores, especially those hosting regular live events, may be making a comeback. Last year, membership in the American Booksellers Association rose for the first time, after two decades of decline. And 37 percent of 18- to 34-year-olds told a recent survey they preferred to buy their books from independents. At the other end of the business, the emergence of Apple as a competitor to Amazon, and Google's recent announcement that it will set up its own online bookstore, may allow publishers wiggle room in negotiating terms.

At the Book Expo in New York City, Jonathan Galassi, head of Farrar, Straus and Giroux, spoke for many in the business when he said there is something "radically wrong" with the way market determinations have caused the value of books to plummet. He's right: a healthy publishing industry would ensure that skilled authors are recompensed fairly for their work, that selection by trusted and well-resourced editors reduces endless variety to meaningful choice and that ideas and artistry are as important as algorithms and price points in deciding what is sold. Jeff Bezos and his beloved numbers are anathema to such an arrangement; the best things to number would be the days of his company's dominance. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

the boycott's organizers in Ramallah in May. "We have relations, and we import" products from the Jewish state, he added.

The authors mischaracterize Americans for Peace Now's views on boycotting Israel. APN won't endorse a systematic boycott of everything that is Israel. But we have said that it is not illegitimate for the Palestinians to launch a campaign focused on settlements. That is consistent with our position that boycott and divestment efforts shift their focus from Israel to the occupation and the settlements.

APN has never called BDS anti-Semitic. We have lamented that anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiments may be cloaked in criticism of Israel. At the same time, we have repudiated the tactic of Israel's knee-jerk defenders of jumping to discredit critics of Israeli government policies before taking an honest look at them.

Debra DeLee, *president and CEO*
Americans for Peace Now

Amherst, Mass.

I write to clarify two details in Adam Horowitz and Philip Weiss's article, as far as they concern the official role of Hampshire College. In February 2009 Hampshire's trustees most definitely did not vote "to divest from six military companies involved in the occupation." Moreover, the college had had for many years a socially responsible investment policy. The board's investment committee merely reported to the full board on its decision to deploy a different third-party screen more in line with our values, a screen that at the time tagged some of the six companies but not all, and voted to suspend the policy until it could be updated. In November Hampshire's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine did host a BDS conference, but with the clear and stated understanding that SJP, not the college, was hosting the event.

Ralph Hexter
President, Hampshire College

Emily's 'Epilepsy'—More 'Potted Theory'

London

James Longenbach in "Ardor and the Abyss" [July 5] properly questions the need for a tidy diagnosis of epilepsy to explain Emily Dickinson's reclusion. In fact, Dickinson's latest biographer, Lyndall Gordon (*Lives Like Loaded Guns: Emily Dickinson and Her Family Feuds*), made the diagnosis based on a complete misunderstanding of nineteenth-century pharmacotherapy (a field I am well versed in). From an 1874 formula for epilepsy containing chloral hydrate, glycerine and peppermint, Gordon assumed glycerine—which Dickinson took in 1851-54—was the active ingredient. In fact, it was the bitter medicine chloral hydrate, first noted as an anticonvulsant in 1870. To anyone's knowledge Dickinson never took chloral hydrate. Glycerine was a sweet carbohydrate used to disguise the taste of bitter drugs, and as a supposed nutrient for consumption (tuberculosis), which Dickinson's physician may have suspected. In no medical text or pharmacopeia of the time was glycerine ever suggested as an anticonvulsant. Dickinson even recommended the drug to her brother for his cough. There have been too many potted theories to "explain" Dickinson's magnificent poetry and mysterious persona, which trivialize the poet; this is but the latest.

Norbert Hirschhorn, MD

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Books & the Arts.

DOUG CHAYKA

From Black to Black

by DIMITER KENAROV

Every day, at three in the afternoon, I make a trip down the Danube. To travel from Germany's Black Forest to Romania's Black Sea takes a matter of minutes, so I try to enjoy myself as much as possible. I sink into a cushy armchair, rev up the stereo and embark on an epic voyage. "Information on the water levels of the Danube River, in centimeters," the familiar voice on *Horizont*, the Bulgarian National Radio, announces with the deepest solemnity before reading out the relevant hydrographical values, first in Bulgarian and then in Russian and French. Vienna: 310 (+3); Mohács: 415 (+7); Novi Sad: 162 (-13); Vidin: 380 (+40); Giurgiu: 220 (0).

The captains of river vessels can easily map a course on the Internet, but the daily radio bulletin has remained a fixture in my life. For many years, listening to the fluctuations in the water levels of the Danube was the closest I could get to traveling abroad. Regensburg, Passau, Linz, Vienna: these names mesmerized me. Even places like Bratislava and Budapest, comrades in arms against the decadent West, had the ring of myth to a boy growing up in Bulgaria. Remembering his childhood in the Bulgarian river port of Ruschuk (now Ruse), Elias Canetti wrote, "There, the rest of the world was known as 'Europe,' and if someone sailed up the Danube to Vienna, people said he was going to Europe." If people in Canetti's immediate circle, at the beginning of the twentieth century, still had the occasional opportunity to waltz up to the palaces of the Habsburgs and back, however, the "Europe" I imagined in the 1980s existed only in a galaxy far, far away. To travel up the river as a tourist during the cold war required visas, special permissions, bureaucratic ballast. To swim across it, a negligible distance of a few hundred meters, was to risk both drowning and the bullets of border guards. For nearly fifty years the Danube was a demolished bridge, a liquid roadblock. The wall may have been in Berlin, but the truly impassable one was an invisible dam on the Danube, somewhere between Vienna and Bratislava.

The Danube—or Ister, as the ancient Greeks called it—is a natural highway of nearly 3,000 kilometers. "The greatest of all the rivers which we know," declared Herodotus. "A path for the spirit to follow," wrote Hölderlin, following the footfalls of the Greeks in his hymn "The Ister." Human tribes traveled west against the current, colonizing the core of the continent, gradually shaping it. Before the Americas, there was Europe. The Romans made a few feeble attempts to bring traffic under control by turning the river into the fortified frontier, or *limes*, of their empire, but without much success. South of the Danube civilization cowered; in the north, the barbarians bided their time.

Blue River, Black Sea
A Journey Along the Danube Into the Heart of the New Europe.
By Andrew Eames.
Bantam Press. 432 pp. £17.99.

Dimiter Kenarov is a freelance journalist and contributing editor of the Virginia Quarterly Review.

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There is probably no other geographical element of Europe that has absorbed more political weather than the Danube. Unlike the Russian Volga and the Franco-German Rhine, it has served many masters, as a shield or a spear. In 1683, by the walls of Vienna, John III Sobieski and Charles of Lorraine routed the armies of Kara Mustafa, marking the beginning of the end of the Ottoman Empire. Not long thereafter, in 1704, the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene of Savoy vanquished the Franco-Bavarian alliance at the Battle of Blenheim, an important event in the War of the Spanish Succession. Near the river town of Ulm, Napoleon forced the Austrians to surrender with barely a fight. And Hitler's Drang nach Osten—yearning for the East—had a strong Danubian stink. "Do not forget," the elderly Heinrich Heine wrote to the young Karl Marx, "the difference between water and a river is that the latter has a memory, a past, a history."

So many writers have traveled the Danube that their tributary ink could turn its waters black.

It has taken twenty years of European integration for the memories of the cold war to seep away. Quietly meandering across ten countries—Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine—and running softly past more than fifty-five towns and cities, including four capitals, the Danube is once again a major route for trade and tourism, diluting national and political borders and linking numerous shoreline communities into a single organism. The Rhine-Main-Danube Canal, completed in 1992, allows ships to navigate passage from the North Sea to the Black, chugging through the heart of the continent. The river's delta, with its sprawling network of lagoons and marshes, is a Unesco World Heritage Site and an important bird sanctuary—with its own environmental problems, of course. Today, to sail along the Danube is to see the new face of Europe, old as it is. And, luckily for me perhaps, the daily radio bulletins on *Horizont* are no longer my only means of travel.

Traveling the Danube became a fad in 1829. That was the year two Englishmen, John Andrews and Joseph Pritchard, founded the First Danube Steamship Company, which lured scores of elated pleasure seekers. "A motley crowd on board, such perhaps as never met together on the deck of a steam-boat before," wrote the Irish journalist and literary editor Michael Quin about one of those early voyages. Standing among Austrians, Moldavians, Jews, Hungarian nobles and Tyrolean emigrants, he traveled in style down the river from Pest (Budapest) to the Ottoman town of Ruschuk. It was a thrilling but perilous undertaking. Unlike the well-trodden path of the Grand Tour, with its picturesque Parisian streetscapes and Florentine galleries, the Danube offered a wilder ride for people with money and a taste for adventure. Although its waters flowed across half the continent, knowledge of the river was scarce and scattered, especially when it came to portions under Ottoman control. Europe was split in two long before the cold war, and the Danube was the main gateway into its eastern, darker territories. The course of "civilization" had gradually reversed directions.

William Beattie, another of those early steamboat passengers, portrayed that division with typical Victorian bigotry. East of Budapest, he wrote in his 1844 travelogue *The Danube*, the tourist "feels as if he were taking farewell of civilization, and entering upon a vast primeval desert, where man is still a semi-barbarian; and where the arts by which he converts to his use the natural products of the earth are still in their infancy, or wholly unknown." As far as Beattie was concerned, Eastern Europe might as well have been an island in the middle of the Pacific. Quin was similarly dismayed by the seemingly crude ways of life he encountered but a little bit more optimistic in his vision of the future. He praised "the miracles of the age of steam" and then blithely prophesied, "Those countries, which have hitherto seemed scarcely to belong to Europe, will be rapidly brought within the pale of civilization…and new combinations…will be created, which may give birth to important changes in the distribution of political power on the continent." He was right, of course: steam did alter the political landscape of Eastern Europe. (Could it be that James Watt was personally responsible for the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the whole contemporary history of the continent?) However, Quin's journey down the Danube was also a reassertion of his cultural identity and his sunny view about technological progress. As the historian Larry Wolff pointed out in his seminal work *Inventing Eastern Europe*, "It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as its complementary other half." And the Danube was the road most inventors took.

So many writers have traveled the Danube that their tributary ink, if channeled into a single stream, would turn the water black. From the Italian naturalist and geographer Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, who professed to have mastered "the anatomy of the river" and then published in 1726 his magisterial six-volume *Opus Danubiale*, to the contemporary Hungarian writer Péter Esterházy, with his playful travelogue *The Glance of Countess Hahn-Hahn (Down the Danube)*, published in 1991, the outflow of words has been endless. To look for the authentic Danube would be futile, for nobody can describe the same river twice. "It is I who will say what the Danube is," Esterházy's protagonist, the Traveler, insists, as so many others before him have: Germans and Austrians, Hungarians and Russians, as well as the odd Serbian, Romanian and Bulgarian. For some reason, however, it was the British and a few American explorers, outsiders with ever-roving empirical eyes and an insatiable appetite for the foreign, who frequently attempted to distill the Danube's essence. Some, like Quin and Beattie, were deeply prejudiced against the world they were about to encounter. Others, like the American painter Francis Davis Millet, who paddled downriver in a canoe in 1891, wrote about the local people and their environs with sympathy and understanding. Then there were those who transcended the ranks of mere travelers to join the great writers.

Patrick Leigh Fermor is the best of the lot. In the winter of 1933, at 18, he set out on foot from Rotterdam toward Istanbul—or Constantinople, as his romantic imagination insisted. With just a rucksack on his back and two books in hand—*The Oxford Book of English Verse* and the poems of Horace—he traversed the better part of the pre-war continent "like a tramp or a pilgrim or a wandering scholar." His trek along the Danube made up only one leg of his amazing odyssey, but it was the most remarkable one. Poring over his maps and trying to decide whether to head for sunny Venice or press farther east, he writes, "Just in time, the windings of the Middle and the Lower Danube began to reassert their claims and the Carpathians and the Great Hungarian Plain and the Balkan ranges and all these mysterious regions which lay between the Vienna Woods and the Black Sea brought their rival magnetisms into play. Was I really about to trudge through this almost mythical territory?"

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Like his predecessors' Eastern Europe, Leigh Fermor's was wild and enchanting, a place of literary fantasy. But he also made sure his version surpassed everyone else's in adventure and creativity. He camped with Gypsies, rode a horse across Hungary, played bike-polo, rolled in the hay with ruddy peasant girls and replenished his dwindling supplies by freelancing as a portraitist. Even though he started out a simple backpacker, he soon befriended Danubian aristocrats, who assisted his travels by providing him with letters of introduction to their peers down the road. By Leigh Fermor's own admission, he ended up "strolling from castle to castle, sipping Tokay out of cut-glass goblets and smoking pipes a yard long with archdukes instead of halving gaspers with tramps." Except for a few clouds gathering on the political horizon—the assassination of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss and the purge of Hitler's SA rivals during the Night of the Long Knives in the summer of 1934—his journey offered little premonition of the tragedy that was about to unfold. The Danube Valley was still a center of literature and science, a home to hospitable farmers and a vibrant Jewish culture, a place where ethnic and linguistic boundaries easily overlapped. A vast aristocratic network connected each country to its neighbors, and the architectural monuments of Europe—which Leigh Fermor describes in great technical detail, as if to save them from the incendiary bombs of the Luftwaffe and the RAF—were still intact.

What makes Leigh Fermor's descriptions of life along the Danube in the early 1930s so fascinating is not documentary accuracy—George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London* is a much stronger sociopolitical book from that same period—but his idiosyncratic, highly stylized approach. In two brilliant volumes published about fifty years after the fateful journey, *A Time of Gifts* (1977) and *Between the Woods and the Water* (1986), the much older and more erudite Leigh Fermor exercises with ease his linguistic legerdemain and eidetic memory. (The third volume, which records the last leg of the journey, is eagerly awaited by readers, including the writer of these lines.) Looking back at the lost world of pre-war Europe through an elaborately constructed stereoscope of language, he narrates a gilded, rococo fairy tale. He summons landscapes locked behind the frosted windowpanes of nostalgia: "Imaginary interiors," he calls them. If travel writing is a form of biography, then Leigh Fermor, along with his late disciple Bruce Chatwin, is one of its best contemporary practitioners. In that sense, the Danube is not Europe's but Leigh Fermor's carotid artery.

No account of the river could be complete, however, without at least a cursory glance at what may be the definitive encyclopedia on the subject: *Danube* (1986), by the Italian journalist and scholar Claudio Magris. While not strictly a travelogue, it offers the finest and most exhaustive journey across the history and culture of the region, from early Roman to late Soviet times. Woven out of a series of meditative vignettes and marvelously written, it is a stream fed by numerous sources that freshen the principal narrative along the way. Magris's Danube is not coiling waters and muddy banks so much as a current of ideas incessantly shaping the intellectual landscape of the continent: geography is intimately connected to history, and the movement through space is also a movement through time. Divisions are less important than continuities, with the river providing the spiritual link between Europe's diverse communities. Unlike most travelers, Magris does not think in binary categories such as East/West but explores the shared cultural affinities created by art, philosophy and politics. And rather than the exotic blandishments of the foreign, his Danube offers the banal flow of the familiar, all too familiar world of Kafka's clerks, where nations resemble one another in their passive, theoretical approach to life, saddled by too much history and learning. "The European spirit feeds on books…gnaws at the volumes of history in the libraries or, like moths, eats into ladies' hats, shawls, and other dainty items of the wardrobe." A direct heir to the old Habsburg Empire, an empire that preferred to "survive" rather than "live," the Danubian Europe Magris traversed in the early 1980s was similarly a place of stasis and decay, without a future, existing in "a state of permanent stalemate": a Europe without qualities.

The strength of Magris's book is also its weakness. When sounding the metaphysical depths of the Danube, describing the grand narratives of history or introducing the ideas of novelists and philosophers, he often forgets that the river is also the home of actual people. With the exception of a few vivid episodes (hunting hares "with a taste for pansies" at Vienna's Central Cemetery; sailing through the scenic delta), his journey remains more cerebral than visceral. And even though the book was initially subtitled *A Sentimental Journey From the Source to the*

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Black Sea, there is little of Laurence Sterne's interest in human relations and sympathy for fellow travelers. Magris's Danube remains an abstraction in a dry riverbed. A drink from the fountain of knowledge is a good thing, but it rarely satisfies the reader's thirst.

"Google Earth's detail continued as far as Vienna and then, where the river changed from Upper Danube to Lower, it went impressionistic, turning to Van Goghian swirls and Klee-like spangles of colour," notes the British journalist and travel writer Andrew Eames in *Blue River, Black Sea*. "Instead of mucky green it became a deep, idealized blue, as if someone in Google's Politburo had given the command that, in the absence of other info, it should be coloured to match the waltz." Tracing the pixilated route of the Danube in preparation for his trip, Eames, without even realizing it, stumbles upon an astonishing discovery: for all its innovative hype, Google has replicated the conventional, nineteenth-century view of European geography. The updated version of Metternich's famous "East of Vienna, the Orient begins" could very well be "East of Vienna, Google Earth ends."

For all its blood-spattered sins, communism in Eastern Europe was hardly Miltonic.

Eames, the author of an acclaimed travelogue, *The 8:55 to Baghdad*, admits that before embarking on his new adventure he had only the vaguest of notions of the "European Amazon." "For many years," he remarks, "Thailand was far more interesting than Transylvania, and destinations right under our noses, part of our own continent, remained far more foreign to us than many places halfway round the globe." All that changed with the territorial expansion of the European Union. With the flood of Eastern Europeans into Britain "to do our plumbing and loft conversions," there was no longer any way to avoid looking at the other Europe. Eames comes to his material with typical Anglo-centric prejudice—us versus them—but he seems to be doing so with an awareness of his limited point of view. Thus, the trip down the Danube becomes an ablution from ignorance. Or is his innocent curiosity for the native lands of the Immigrants, like that of Michael Quin and William Beattie, another means to reassert his cultural authority by inventing "the New Europe"? When the Berlin Wall came down, he recalls, "the West started to wrap its warm hands around the chilly East." It is an unfortunate metaphor, for it dimly suggests strangulation.

Eames begins his journey on a second-hand bicycle. It appears to be the right choice, at least on the well-paved roads of Germany and Austria. Following the famous Danube Bike Path, the first leg of his tour proves pretty uneventful, with "highly regimented fields of wheat" rolling away from the roadside and the occasional high-speed train zooming past. It is the humdrum German countryside of postcards, but Eames manages to spice things up with humorous, bantering prose. In Ingolstadt, the home of Audi's headquarters, everything seems so neat and tidy that "you could have turned the city upside down and shaken it and nothing would have fallen out."

Nothing is what it seems, however. Europe has changed dramatically, including the river itself. Heavily canalized, with only 30 percent of it free-flowing, it has lost 80 percent of its original flood plain. "From having been a reedy, marshy, wandering, wonderful, amorphous living thing, it has been rendered into straight lines, made far less interesting, and more dangerous, by the hand of man." Scarred by hydroelectric dams, irrigation canals and industrial pollution, the Danube has become more a creature of engineering than a wonder of nature. Eames's interest in the environmental plight of the river is fleeting: he could have expounded on the topic a bit more, but he chooses instead to look at more traditional travel subjects.

Heiligenkreuz Abbey, the renowned twelfth-century Cistercian monastery by the Austrian riverbanks, has cheerfully adopted the ways of the world. Its monks surf the web, watch TV and read novels, while their abbot, Gregor Ulrich von Henckel Donnersmarck (uncle of the Oscar-winning director of the movie *The Lives of Others*), holds an MBA and regularly makes pronouncements such as "It is important to sell expensive land for development and buy other cheaper land for agriculture." A few spiritual traditions, nonetheless, have been preserved, and Eames's lyrical descriptions are worthy of the occasion: "It was hypnotic to sit in the congregation—there were rarely more than a handful of us—and witness the white-robed community file into the tall, carved-walnut choir stalls, like the ivories taking up their positions on a giant piano keyboard."

The square Danubian aristocracy has its hipper sides as well. A great admirer of Patrick Leigh Fermor, Eames, in emulation, decides to pay a few visits to the castles down the road and check out how the blue bloods are faring. In the German town of Sigmaringen he secures an audience with Prince Karl-Friedrich von Hohenzollern (the House of Hohenzollern is one of Europe's oldest and most respected). Running a steel factory, a ski resort and an investment company for business start-ups, Karl-Friedrich is the good old bourgeois capitalist, far more interested in prices than princesses or cut-glass goblets. As Eames observes, "I had the distinct feeling that he would be happier discussing the state of the Dow Jones index than the life and times of the German aristocracy." The surprises don't end there. On his way out, Eames receives a parting gift: a CD of the jazz band Charly and the Jivemates. On the cover, center stage, wearing snakeskin shoes and a leopardskin jacket, is Charly, *aka* Prince Karl-Friedrich von Hohenzollern.

Eames dedicates a great part of his book to the lot of the present-day Danubian nobility—there are whole chapters recounting dinners with archdukes and interviews with royal pretenders—but his gawking fascination with the upper classes soon starts to wear on the reader's patience. Tracing Leigh Fermor's footsteps might have seemed like a good idea for a while, but every tribute holds a trap. To put it bluntly, in the twenty-first century nobody gives a brass farthing for the aristocracy. Its members may still parade across the front pages of tabloids, but their lives are happily irrelevant today, despite all the hereditary wealth and eroticized glamour. If one is to discover "the heart of New Europe," one has to look elsewhere. And even though Eames crosses paths with a lumpen crowd during his stay in Vienna (the graffiti artists in the underpasses; the Turkish break dancers by St. Stephen's Cathedral; the "fractured families Skypeing each other in a babel of voices and languages" in seedy Internet cafes), he is too preoccupied with his literary pilgrimage and far too removed from youth and immigrant cultures to make sense of the new world he is inhabiting. The main strength of Leigh Fermor's work is its freewheeling, uncharted nature, taking life as it comes; Eames, for all his desire

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to imitate his predecessor, just won't let himself go.

Upon entering what were once the westernmost feeding grounds of the Soviet leviathan, Slovakia and Hungary, Eames loses the last of his cultural moorings. With no knowledge of the local languages and with only the flimsiest grasp of the region's history and customs (he is certainly no Claudio Magris), he appears pretty lost. From all the varieties of worldly experience Budapest offers, he chooses some flashy downtown cafes and the company of English-speaking aristocrats, who fill him in on the horrors of communism. Based on such brief encounters and perhaps a few historical overviews, Eames attempts to reconstruct a picture of what life must have been like behind the Iron Curtain but then fails to move beyond the clichés that demonize the former regimes as supreme evil. For all its blood-spattered sins, communism in Eastern Europe was hardly Miltonic: it was a drab, mediocre, secondhand dictatorship.

After a rather tedious horseback ride across the Great Hungarian Plain—again in emulation of Leigh Fermor, but now under the guidance of a tourist agency—the journey finally takes a more intimate turn. In Serbian "cowboy country," Eames travels on a barge carrying a cargo of china clay down the Danube. The *Argo*, with its charismatic and colorful three-person crew of former Yugoslavs, is a smaller version of Melville's *Pequod*. It also offers an optimistic view of a place ravaged by so many wars in the 1990s. "You write this in your book, Mr. Andrew," the captain instructs the author, "Me, Captain Attila, a Hungarian Serb, first mate Vlado, a Serb Serb, and engineer Ivica, a Croatian. Hungarian, Serb, Croatian work together no problem. One happy family, see?" Sailing with a local crew, just another deckhand among them, Eames gets to know their quirks, their opinions, their lives. As it happens, upon a closer examination, political allegiances are still unwavering, and memories still raw. Passing by Vukovar, the first city racked by the Yugoslav conflicts, Eames makes the following observation: "All three crew of the *Argo*—the Serb, the Croat and the Hungarian—were in the bridge as we came abreast of the ruin [of the church], and they deliberately avoided looking at it or commenting on it, gazing downriver instead." It is an important moment because, despite all the official pan-European optimism, it shows that the ghosts of the continent are still stirring, and one needs only to take a trip down the Danube to hear them howl.

Toward the end of his journey, Eames takes a short detour from the river to walk the fields and woods of Romania's Transylvania (in the footsteps of Leigh Fermor again), but this time his decision proves fortunate. There are moments of real beauty here: a rural family working the fields, "the father scything a poor crop, the children tumbling over one another in his wake, and the mother raking and stacking"; a village full of old men in black felt hats, "chain-smoking, waiting for nothing"; and, most bizarre, out in the Transylvanian countryside, on a hill famous for its aphrodisiac powers, there stands "a heart-shaped fountain decorated with a massive wooden penis."

But this landscape of primal, bucolic charm is being altered by forces more modern and less benign. A Canadian mining company is hoping to use dangerous cyanide technologies to extract gold. A nearby river has become "a conveyor-belt of used packaging" tossed aside by reckless picnickers. Everywhere, underneath the delightful surface of things, lurks environmental devastation. Once the most backward and inaccessible of all the Eastern European states, along with Bulgaria, Romania has climbed out into the open; and while the political system may have democratized, helter-skelter market liberalization and a culture of unbridled consumption have also destroyed the sense of shared (natural) space and community upon which every democratic system depends. "The net result was a local ecological disaster," Eames writes. "The litter-lined river became an emblem of Romania's new freedom and its new purchasing power: 'I am free, therefore I choose to throw my empty can of Carlsberg into the Somesul Rece.' And who was I to criticize? The likes of my country, after all, were the ones who persuaded them to buy the cans of Carlsberg in the first place." These are some of the strongest pages in the book because they resist easy slogans and show the other, dirtier heart of the continent, often ignored by official histories. The great changes of 1989 might have brought freedom to the people of Eastern Europe, Eames suggests, but it has been the freedom that comes from the sudden bursting of a dam wall, the waters inundating everything on their way downstream. There is a reason people still follow radio bulletins on the water levels of the Danube.

At the very end of his travels, gazing upon the Danube's delta from the Romanian town of Sulina, Eames muses, "When does a journey like this finally end?" Then, with a bit of melancholy, he provides the answer to his question: "I'd come to a stop at sullen Sulina simply because there was nowhere further to go." In 2010 the countries from the Black Forest to the Black Sea have been reunited under the banner of capitalism, but it seems that even this New Europe has limits. Despite its numerous flaws, *Blue River, Black Sea* finally does what every decent travelogue must do: it tells a true story that nobody believes is true. ■

Indivisible

The unit of measure united
in the particulars inevitably leads to divisions; part
of medium is to be indivisible, so divines the medium.
He says, "I am neutral. I am neutrino & pass through
objects to stay objective. I limit myself
to experiments involving infinity—that is, unlimited
license to be licentious: does it matter to murder matter?
And is it murder to dissect what matters—how will I
discover what is murder or what is matter? As a matter
of fact, the uptilt creates a steep plane
interrupting the plain, a stratum revealed as part of many
strata united and thus dividable. As a stratospheric
shower, particles aggregate into one granite unit. Is wave
action just another wave to that which is indivisible?"

MARCELLA DURAND

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SHELF LIFE

by JOHN PALATTELLA

DURING A STAY IN MANHATTAN IN 1956, Sylvia Beach, founder of the legendary English-language Parisian bookshop Shakespeare and Company, mailed to Harriet Weaver, former editor of the fabled little magazine *The Egoist*, a description of the view from her hotel near the East River. "It is a big, rough, rushing workingman of a river with tugboats busy with their jobs and barges and freighters interesting to watch. It is next door to the United Nations, but I prefer the tugs." The image is telling: the architect of a crossroads of literary Modernism favoring not the ambassadors mingling in concrete and glass but the tugs nosing vital vessels up- and downriver, against tricky currents.

SYLVIA BEACH PAPERS, MANUSCRIPTS DIVISION, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Sylvia Beach

We know the story of Beach's life. Beach told a version a half-century ago in her memoir *Shakespeare and Company*; Shari Benstock offered another thirty years later in *Women of the Left Bank: Paris, 1900–1940*. With *The Letters of Sylvia Beach* (Columbia; $29.95), edited by Kari Walsh, we now have an unvarnished view of life from the bookshop floor, the scene of many of Beach's worries and triumphs. Her taste was impeccable. She published *Ulysses*, arranged for the first French translation of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," translated Henri Michaux and advocated for a French edition of Yeats's poems. But there's no use denying it: her letters are generally tedious. Literary gossip, personal confessions, rants, raves and judgments about the work of the authors Beach championed are mostly absent. (But that should not be taken as a sign of deficiency. If the decision to publish *Ulysses* doesn't count as a sound judgment, what does?) Her letters, dutiful exercises in the tallying of personal and business obligations renewed, satisfied and overdue, often feel like they were torn from a ledger. During a 1953 trip to Manhattan, Beach wrote to her lover Adrienne Monnier in Paris, "I intend to make a list of those dishes" that had attracted her eye "and some adjectives that accompany them." Judging from the letters, she never did.

Yet in the tedium of the letters lies a valuable lesson: literary institutions are hard-won achievements. Beach "worked in the arts and lived over the store," writes Noël Riley Fitch in his foreword to the volume. Walsh has carefully warehoused an accidental inventory of the obstacles and difficulties that Beach faced there—fluctuating capital, pirated editions, unreliable postal service, sponges (in 1930 Joyce took 13,000 francs in "overdrafts" from Shakespeare and Company)—and that she often surmounted through resourcefulness, fortitude and the complications of luck. Minding the store was a hard life for Beach—big, rough, rushing—but always worth it. Three cheers for the tugs.

WORLD WAR II GAVE GÜNTER EICH a second chance as a poet. In the 1930s he was an aspiring twentysomething writer who lived in Berlin and Dresden and published second-rate lyric poems. In 1939 he was drafted into the Wehrmacht; six years later he returned from the war with his civilian status restored. He called himself "a registered refugee with a backpack." He had little else to his name: his manuscripts had been destroyed when an Allied bomber flattened his apartment in Berlin. He started writing again. In 1950 he read poems at a gathering of Gruppe 47, which was founded three years earlier to rejuvenate German as a language for poetry in the wake of the Third Reich. Günter Grass, Heinrich Böll and other members of the Gruppe were impressed and awarded Eich their inaugural literary prize.

Scenes of isolated survival amid bewildering change appear throughout *Angina Days* (Princeton; $24.95), an excellent comprehensive bilingual selection of Eich's poems edited and translated by Michael Hofmann. "When I opened the window/ fishes swam into the room,/herrings," writes Eich in "Where I Live." "They are a nuisance. But more annoying/are the sailors." With the poetry of Paul Celan, another member of Gruppe 47, one encounters what Heather McHugh has called an "unforeknown language" latent with poised equivalencies and paradoxes of dimension. That's not the case with Eich, whose compressed poems are unsettling and disturbing but rarely unmoored or cryptic.

Eich is irascible, but more a fool than a scold. "Increase" is a complaint, but about sea cucumbers or the poet? "The existence of sea cucumbers/bothers me,/especially the question:/did I fail/to notice them before,/or have there/really gotten to be/more of them?" Eich is perplexed but rarely embattled, a temperament manifested in his relation to time. Here is "Memorial":

> The moors we wanted to hike have
> been drained.
> Their turf has warmed our evenings.
> The wind is full of black dust.
> It scours the names of gravestones
> and etches this day
> into us.

And here is "Last Week":

> Wednesday. The chestnuts are in a
> rush.
> No verb
> can prevent Thursday.
>
> My father would be a hundred now.
> His heirs have come to an
> accommodation,
> are lugging sacks of chestnuts
> against the wall—where they are
> forgotten like symmetries.
>
> Everywhere we are being overtaken.
>
> In Delhi, if a man dies,
> he is unable to drop.

It is not surrender but a blending of helplessness and determination that enables Eich to convey his bewilderment about the world, and its overtakenness. ■

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Restless Confederates

by ERIC FONER

Confederate Reckoning
Power and Politics in the Civil War South.
By Stephanie McCurry.
Harvard. 449 pp. $35.

The Long Shadow of the Civil War
Southern Dissent and Its Legacies.
By Victoria E. Bynum.
North Carolina. 221 pp. $35.

The bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth has come and gone, and with it a flood of books about the sixteenth president. But the sesquicentennial of the Civil War now looms on the horizon, promising its own deluge of books of every size, shape and description. We will be fortunate indeed if in sheer originality and insight they measure up to *Confederate Reckoning* and *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, new works by Stephanie McCurry and Victoria Bynum, respectively, on the Confederate experience.

Most scholarly history on the Confederacy has been shaped, implicitly or explicitly, by a desire to explain Southern defeat. Devotees of the Lost Cause insist that gallant Southern soldiers inevitably succumbed to the Union's overwhelming advantages in manpower and economic resources. The stronger side, however, does not always win a war, as the United States learned in Vietnam. This fact has led historians to try to locate internal causes for the failure of the quest for Southern independence. They have identified such culprits as poor political leadership, excessive individualism, desertion from the army by nonslaveholding soldiers, waning enthusiasm for the war among upper-class white women and disaffection among the slaves.

McCurry and Bynum are less interested in why the South lost—although their books shed light on this question—than in the social and political consequences of how it conducted the war. Taken together, they show how the effort to create a slaveholders' republic sundered Southern society and changed the contours of Southern politics. The subtitle of McCurry's book—"Power and Politics in the Civil War South"—is surely meant to be ironic. Most readers will no doubt expect another study of Jefferson Davis's administration or the battle between advocates of states' rights and central control. But McCurry challenges us to expand our definition of politics to encompass not simply government but the entire public sphere. The struggle for Southern independence, she shows, opened the door for the mobilization of two groups previously outside the political nation—white women of the nonslaveholding class and slaves.

McCurry begins by stating what should be obvious but is frequently denied, that the Confederacy was something decidedly odd in the nineteenth century: "an independent proslavery nation." The Confederate and state constitutions made clear that protecting slavery was their raison d'être. Abandoning euphemisms like "other persons" by which the US Constitution referred to slaves without directly acknowledging their existence, Confederates forthrightly named the institution, erected protections around it and explicitly limited citizenship to white persons. McCurry implicitly pokes holes in other explanations for Southern secession, such as opposition to Republican economic policies like the tariff or fear for the future of personal freedom under a Lincoln administration. Georgia, she notes, passed a law in 1861 that made continuing loyalty to the Union a capital offense, hardly the action of a government concerned about individual liberty or the rights of minorities.

The Confederacy, McCurry writes, was conceived as a "republic of white men." But since of its 9 million people more than 3 million were slaves and half of the remainder disenfranchised white women, the new nation faced from the outset a "crisis of legitimacy." However much the law defined white women as appendages of their husbands, entitled to protection but not a public voice, and slaves simply as property, Southern leaders realized early that they would have to compete with the Union for the loyalty of these groups, treating them, in effect, as independent actors. The need to generate consent allowed "the Confederate unenfranchised" to step onto the stage of politics, with their own demands, grievances and actions.

McCurry's chapters delineating the political emergence of poor white women constitute the most dramatic and original parts of *Confederate Reckoning*. She makes clear that introducing gender as a category of analysis changes the definition of politics and power, but simultaneously warns against considering "woman" a unitary identity independent of class. All Confederate women struggled to cope as their loved ones were drawn off into the army, many never to return. Women of all classes called upon the state for assistance during the war. But when wealthy women made demands on the Confederate government, they did so as members of a national elite.

Poorer women forged a different political identity. They spoke the language not of Southern nationalism or upper-class identity but of family and community. They described themselves as soldiers' wives and invoked what McCurry calls a "politics of subsistence." Lacking the aid of slave labor, they found that the absence of their husbands from their previously self-sufficient farms made it impossible to feed themselves and their children. As the war progressed and the economic situation deteriorated, they flooded Confederate authorities with petitions seeking assistance, not as charity but as a right. In demanding aid from local, state and national governments, these women articulated a new vision of themselves as citizens with legitimate claims upon the state. Eventually, poor women took to the streets in food riots in major Confederate cities, the most dramatic example of their emergence as a political force.

The policies of the Confederate government and the actions of slaveowning planters exacerbated these women's sense of grievance. The Confederate Congress enacted the twenty-Negro exemption, allowing one adult man to remain at home for every twenty slaves on a plantation in order to forestall slave resistance. Policies like impressment and the tax-in-kind, which allowed the army to appropriate farm goods, were applied much more rigorously against poorer Southerners than wealthy ones. Planters showed little interest in assisting their suffering neighbors and resisted calls by Confederate authorities to grow edible crops instead of cotton. "The rich people about here there hearts are of steel," one Virginia woman wrote to Jefferson Davis. Indeed, planters' unwillingness to sacrifice self-interest for the common good is a recurring theme of *Confederate Reckoning*. Having created a nation based on slavery, they proved reluctant to provide blacks for military labor, fearing this would interfere with their hold on their slave property. "You cheerfully yield your children to your country," one antiplanter broadside asked, "how you refuse your servants?"

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Later generations would create the myth of the ardently patriotic Southern woman. Contemporaries knew better. The agitation of poor women, McCurry shows, alarmed Southern officials and directly affected Confederate policy. Politicians could not ignore the pleas of soldiers' wives. Congress moved to exempt poor families from taxation. Governors like Zebulon Vance of North Carolina and Joseph Brown of Georgia distributed supplies to needy families. By the end of the war, McCurry writes, the Confederacy had created a significant "welfare system." Georgia spent more money on relief in one year than Massachusetts (a state with a significant poor population) did during the entire war.

In the second half of *Confederate Reckoning*, McCurry turns to the actions of slaves during the war. Here she covers more familiar ground but still manages to offer striking new insights. It is now widely recognized that the actions of slaves who ran away to Union lines helped to put the slavery issue on the agenda of the Lincoln administration, and that by serving in the Union army black soldiers staked a claim to citizenship in the post-bellum world. Most slaves, however, lived out the war behind Confederate lines. The government they had to deal with, McCurry points out, was Davis's, not Lincoln's.

The agitation of poor women alarmed Southern officials and affected Confederate policy.

From the outset, McCurry shows, slaves carefully followed national politics and the course of the war. Even before Lincoln's election, the planter Charles Manigault noted, his slaves had "very generally got the idea of being emancipated when 'Lincon' comes in." Once the war began, slaves took every opportunity to aid Union forces and resist the demands of their owners. McCurry describes Manigault's plantations as being "in a state of barely suppressed insurrection." How to characterize slaves' actions has long posed a challenge for historians. W.E.B. Du Bois wrote of a "general strike" in the Confederacy. McCurry goes even further, using the phrase "a massive slave rebellion." This seems an exaggeration. But she is on firm ground when she insists that a battle ensued between North and South for slaves' "political allegiance."

Like the actions of white women, those of slaves strongly affected public policy, in ways that weakened Southern unity and wartime mobilization. Unrest on the plantations led to the twenty-Negro exemption, which, in turn, heightened discontent among nonslaveholding farm families. Slaves' propensity to escape when near Union lines explains why planters resisted their use as military laborers, weakening the war effort. Planter resistance to the army's impressment of slave labor drew support from state governments that tried to undermine the policies of the Davis administration. The well-known battles over states' rights in the Confederacy, McCurry convincingly argues, were really arguments over whether the needs of the national government should take precedence over the property rights of slaveholders.

The struggle over slave impressment offered a prelude to the well-known debate of 1864–65 over the enrollment of slaves in the Confederate army. In the Emancipation Proclamation Lincoln had authorized black enlistment, and by war's end some 200,000 black men had served in the Union army and navy. As the Confederacy's situation worsened, military leaders including Robert E. Lee called for enrolling blacks. Lee went so far as to propose coupling enlistment with a plan for "gradual and general emancipation." This was far more than the Confederate Congress could stomach. In March 1865, it finally authorized slave enlistment, in a law that made no mention of freedom. In his implementation order, however, Jefferson Davis promised freedom to those who agreed to serve. In other words, Davis acknowledged that slaves were able to make independent decisions and that their loyalty had to be won, not simply commanded.

McCurry correctly points out that enlisting blacks in the Confederate army and offering them freedom did not necessarily mean the end of slavery. Both the British and the Americans had used slave soldiers in the War of Independence, yet slavery survived. It did so as well in the West Indies, where the British raised and freed slave regiments. Had the Confederacy emerged victorious, slavery would certainly have continued. In any event, a few days before the war ended, two companies of Confederate black soldiers from Richmond were sent to the front. Most of these men had already been impressed to work in a Confederate hospital; whether they were truly volunteers may be doubted. Certainly, as McCurry makes clear, the idea that legions of slaves fought for the slaveholders' republic—a notion propagated by neo-Confederate organizations and widely disseminated on the Internet—is a myth.

Confederate Reckoning offers a powerful new paradigm for understanding events on the Confederate home front. Unfortunately, the book's structure to some extent stands at cross-purposes with its argument. Its two parts are not really integrated. White women pretty much disappear from the second half of the narrative, and there is little attention to how the political mobilization of slaves and white women of the nonslaveholding class, so expertly delineated, intersected. Moreover, a full account of how the war politicized previously marginalized groups and heightened tensions within Southern society would require attention to a group neglected in this study—disaffected white men from the nonslaveholding class.

McCurry explains her decision not to write about these white men by pointing out that, thanks to studies of desertion from the Confederate army, we already "know a great deal" about them. But as Victoria Bynum notes in *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, the "communities of dissent" that emerged in the Civil War South involved both men and women. Bynum studies three areas of disaffection within the Confederacy: the "Quaker belt" of central North Carolina; Jones County in southern Mississippi's Piney Woods; and the Big Thicket of East Texas. These localities lay outside the main plantation region and were populated mostly by nonslaveholding families. The three regions shared more than a similar demography. Many of the Mississippi Unionists had relatives in North Carolina, and some of the Texas guerrillas had emigrated from Jones County.

Bynum's subjects "hated the Confederacy" and in some cases took up arms against it. In these areas, bands of deserters plagued the Confederate war effort, and an internal civil war took place that pitted neighbor against neighbor. Unionist activity rested on extended family networks. The wives of deserters and draft dodgers acted not as Confederate soldiers' wives but as anti-Confederate cadres. They threatened public officials; stole from wealthier neighbors; and provided shelter, food and information to male relatives hiding out in the woods.

Bynum, whose well-regarded book on Jones County, *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi's Longest Civil War*, dispelled the idea that it actually "seceded" from the Confederacy, clearly sympathizes with her subjects.

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Some of her ancestors, she writes, were among these lower-class Unionists. But she avoids over-romanticization. Bill Owens, the leading Unionist guerrilla in North Carolina, she notes, was a cold-blooded killer. But heinous acts were not limited to one side. Confederate soldiers tortured Owens's wife to gain information about his whereabouts. Local militia units mistreated Unionist women and children. Owens himself, after his capture toward the end of the war, was taken from his jail cell by unknown parties and murdered.

Bynum's book is not so much a narrative history as a series of discrete, overlapping and somewhat disjointed case studies. But it adds a dimension to McCurry's far broader study by taking the story beyond the end of the Civil War to trace the long-term legacy of pro-Union activism. One chapter shows how family traditions of dissent survived in new forms as veterans of the "inner Civil War" and their descendants joined the biracial Republican Party during Reconstruction and emerged as leaders of Populism in the 1890s and the Socialist Party of Eugene Debs. The legacy of violent white supremacy also survived. The wartime Confederate militia was succeeded by the Ku Klux Klan after the war and "whitecappers" around the turn of the century.

Bynum invokes court cases to track the shifting political fortunes of the postwar South. In one North Carolina county, the members of an extended family challenged the right of a female relative to inherit land on the grounds that she had African ancestry. In 1892 a court ruled against the woman, and she lost the farm she and her late husband had tilled for two decades. Honor, supposedly a central characteristic of white Southern culture, seems to have been in short supply after the Civil War.

One of the more fascinating figures Bynum discusses is Newt Knight, the leader of an armed band of Unionists in Jones County who lived with a black woman and became "the patriarch of an extensive mixed-race community." Bynum relates his long, unsuccessful campaign for monetary compensation from the federal government for his wartime activities. She also explores the fate of his mixed-race children and grandchildren. Some identified as people of color; some disappeared into white society. One descendant, David Knight, served in the Army during World War II, married a white woman in 1946 and two years later was convicted in Mississippi of the crime of miscegenation. The Confederacy certainly cast a long shadow. ■

BELA SZANDELSZKY/AP

A rally in Beirut to commemorate Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, February 14, 2007

A Forest of Fathers

by ELIAS MUHANNA

The Ghosts of Martyrs Square
An Eyewitness Account of Lebanon's Life Struggle.
By Michael Young.
Simon and Schuster. 295 pp. $26.

One weekend during the spring of 2008, I found myself in a discussion with a friend about Lebanon's latest political crisis. In Beirut the office of the Lebanese prime minister was being besieged by a sprawling tent city of protesters led by the country's opposition, demanding the resignation of the premier and his cabinet. The business of government had long since ground to a halt, as had all commercial activity around Martyrs Square, not far from where the protesters were gathered; and multiple efforts to reach a compromise between the opposition and the "March 14" loyalists, a coalition of Sunni, Christian and Druse parties backed by the Bush administration and its European and Arab allies, had ended in failure. Pundits warned daily of a descent into the abyss of sectarian violence and civil war.

Like many Lebanese, I found this state of affairs to be both maddening and deeply ironic. Three years earlier, Martyrs Square had been the scene of what was heralded around the world as Lebanon's rebirth, a popular uprising 1 million strong demanding the end of Syria's military occupation of the country. This uprising—dubbed the Cedar Revolution—was triggered by the assassination of a billionaire former prime minister, Rafik Hariri, the architect of Lebanon's postwar recovery. Syria was widely blamed for the assassination, and the ensuing protests—unprecedented in size and in their brazen defiance of Damascus—coupled with intense international pressure, succeeded in forcing the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. While no one could have imagined that Lebanon's endemic divisiveness was now a thing of the past and that a strong democratic state would emerge spontaneously from the ashes of Syrian tutelage, there was a palpable hope, naïve in retrospect, that the Lebanese could finally take their first step toward building such a state.

Nothing so optimistic had come to pass. In the three years since the withdrawal of Syrian troops, the country had been racked by a series of high-profile assassinations and a devastating war with Israel. An international tribunal established to investigate the murder of Hariri seemed to have stalled, and street violence was mounting between youths allied with opposing factions. Most significant, the country had no president.

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The previous one, Émile Lahoud, a pillar of the pro-Syrian regime, had resigned four months earlier, and the polarized government could not reach agreement over a successor.

All of this I related to my friend—a Syrian expatriate living in New York City—expressing my amazement at how Lebanon had turned into a farce, its political system so broken that it could not even carry out the most elemental of democratic processes: voting a person into office. Amused by my frustration, he suggested that far more remarkable than Lebanon's paralysis was that the Lebanese state had survived without a president for more than 100 days, with no attempted coups, military takeovers or invasions. Imagine such a thing anywhere else in the Middle East: a power vacuum at the highest levels of government "lasting five minutes, let alone four months." The laws of political gravity, he mused, do not apply in Beirut as they do in other Arab capitals. What's more, they never have.

The theme of weak centers and strong peripheries features prominently in *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square*, in which Michael Young tries to make sense of "the Lebanon that emerged between 2005 and 2009, an essential moment in modern Lebanese history." To call that span of four years a "moment"—a term of art employed by cultural historians to allude to the fleeting and the floating—is to suggest its evanescent quality. Indeed, for Young the moment has long since passed, along with whatever possibilities it may once have aroused among the partisans of the Cedar Revolution.

The Ghosts of Martyrs Square is pervaded by a pessimism that only rarely strays into wistfulness, and for those familiar with Young's previous writings the tone may come as a surprise. Since the birth of the March 14 movement, Young has been one of its most prominent spokesmen, as well as an occasionally disconsolate critic. In his weekly columns for the English-language *Daily Star* newspaper in Beirut (where he serves as opinion editor), Young played a central role in chronicling the tribulations of the post-Syrian order and defending the cause of Syria's opponents in Lebanon to an audience based in Beirut and, just as significant, the West. When the movement lost steam and started to accommodate Syria's allies—including the Shiite militant group Hezbollah—Young declared that Syria had won, "its crimes forgotten and its interests protected."

This bleak diagnosis suggests that for Young, what was most important about the fallout from Hariri's assassination wasn't the opportunity for Lebanon to emerge as a sovereign state. Rather, it was the possibility that the Syrian regime would be punished and crippled, perhaps fatally, by the ensuing UN investigation into Hariri's death. Indeed, no commentator has been as singularly focused on the twists and turns of the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon as Young, who has tracked its development and criticized its proceedings in the *Daily Star*, the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. His preoccupation with the investigation has been both obsessive and understandable. While assassinations are, sadly, routine in Lebanon, international investigations into political crimes are not. In this respect, the establishment of the UN tribunal was not merely a development of great political significance. On a more fundamental level, it seemed to redefine the very borders of what was knowable, subverting the entrenched logic of faceless assassins and perfect crimes.

During the heady summer and autumn months of 2005, reports of German and Swiss forensics teams arriving in Beirut were greeted with a mixture of wonder and shock. "They're actually going to prove that Syria was responsible," a relative gushed to me in disbelief. "They won't get away with it this time!" But as the investigation dragged on without indictments being issued, optimism in Beirut was sapped by impatience and eventually frustration, an emotion that courses through Young's prose. Here again was the authoritarian order crushing the will to truth, squelching any hope of justice. What was more, the Cedar Revolution, which had produced the first stirrings of popular resistance to Syrian hegemony, was by Young's lights "never a revolution in the first place, and [was] now as exposed as any old tree to being cut down."

If it was never a revolution to begin with, then what was it? In Young's mind, the outcry against Syria following the Hariri assassination was, at its core, a sectarian phenomenon, the reaction of Lebanon's Sunnis and their allies to "the Shiite gauntlet thrown down on March 8," when hundreds of thousands of Hezbollah supporters demonstrated in support of their allegiance to the embattled Syrian regime. What mobilized a million people to take to the streets six days later under the leadership of the slain man's son, Saad Hariri, was not the stirrings of liberal principles—the story line favored by the international media—but

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rather the sectarian impulses that have always undergirded Lebanese politics.

Such an analysis, Young argues, is not meant to cheapen the March 14 mobilization or detract from its significance. It simply underscores Young's premise that liberalism in Lebanon is the unlikely product of illiberal institutions, "a sectarian system that makes the religious communities and sects more powerful than the state." Whenever communal balance is threatened, a "sectarian thermostat" kicks in "to defend a pluralistic order," which has the dual effect of producing regular deadlocks but also a kind of "paradoxical liberalism." This state of affairs—a political landscape inhabited by a multitude of sectarian leaders, a "forest of fathers," as Young elegantly puts it—is, for him, far better than the alternative, a country with "a single father who cuts down the rest of the forest."

This defense of sectarianism will strike many as odd, but Young is something of a misfit among Lebanese liberals. In a sea of communists, socialists, Arabists and Islamists, Young may be Lebanon's only self-identified libertarian, although there are probably many more unwitting ones among Lebanon's free-wheeling capitalist elite. Indeed, it is tempting to read in Young's portrayal of the "self-regulating nature" of the sectarian system and his valorization of the cacophony of individual freedoms over state-imposed stability a reflection of this libertarianism. When neoconservatives have tried to claim him as one of their own, in light of his support for the Iraq War and George W. Bush's democratization agenda, Young has consistently demurred, reiterating his mistrust of the neocons' "state-centered neo-Wilsonianism" and the "glorification of an uncompetitive form of US domination."

An antipathy toward centrism colors Young's characterization of those Lebanese politicians he most deeply distrusts, like Hezbollah's secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, and the Christian leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, Gen. Michel Aoun. In these figures, Young sees something profoundly at odds with the sectarianism underpinning Lebanon's paradoxical liberalism. They are, as he says, "linear" politicians in a country of "contrapuntal" ones, men who view the pluralistic order with disdain and who strive to impose a "uniformity of opinion, the ideal of the one instead of the many." By contrast, a figure such as the Druse chieftain Walid Jumblatt fairly drips with counterpoint; the sectarian system preserves his relevance as it rewards his malleability.

Young's characterization of Nasrallah and Aoun is puzzling, considering how well it suits another Lebanese leader, one for whom Young evinces no particular affection but also never pillories: Rafik Hariri. By virtue of the immense fortune he made in the construction business and the power granted him by Syria during the postwar years, Hariri was able to dominate not only the Sunni community but the Lebanese state itself. In fact, during his multiple terms as prime minister (all told, he headed five governments in 1992–98 and 2000–04), it often appeared that Hariri *was* the state. He may not have been known for using his power to repress all opposition, but he did use it to tame Lebanon's riotous "pluralism" and impose a uniformity of opinion regarding his own visions for the country.

In certain respects, Hariri's governing style wasn't such a bad thing. After fifteen years of civil war and a vacuum of state authority, a strong leader was what many Lebanese desired. As Young suggests in his account of Hariri's reconstruction of downtown Beirut—which involved the seizure of several hundred thousand square meters of private property through eminent domain—the means employed may have been abusive and unconstitutional, but the ends made it clear that the Sunni leader "had won [the] argument." Detectable in this admission is the implication that, for Young, "linearity" in politics is not necessarily a vice as long as the line is pointed in the right direction. In the case of Hariri, who envisioned Lebanon as "a bastion of liberal capitalism and ecumenical permissiveness," the short-circuiting of the sectarian order and its pluralism seemed to be an acceptable price to pay.

There are no heroes in *The Ghosts of Martyrs Square*, only tragic characters hampered by their own flaws and the predations of others. Young's book is a sober and lucid acclamation of those elements of Lebanese society that both constitute a liberal identity and are antithetical to it. Young recognizes that sectarianism is not an ideal but that, "thanks to the pluralism it elicits, it can be a way station on the path toward a Lebanon that is a common concern for all its citizens." What might this Lebanon look like? And what kind of path might it chart to a liberal state shorn of its paradoxes? Young does not address these questions, leaving the reader to wonder whether he has the answers, or whether this is simply a subject for another book. ■

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Events

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The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $210 for 50 words; $260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

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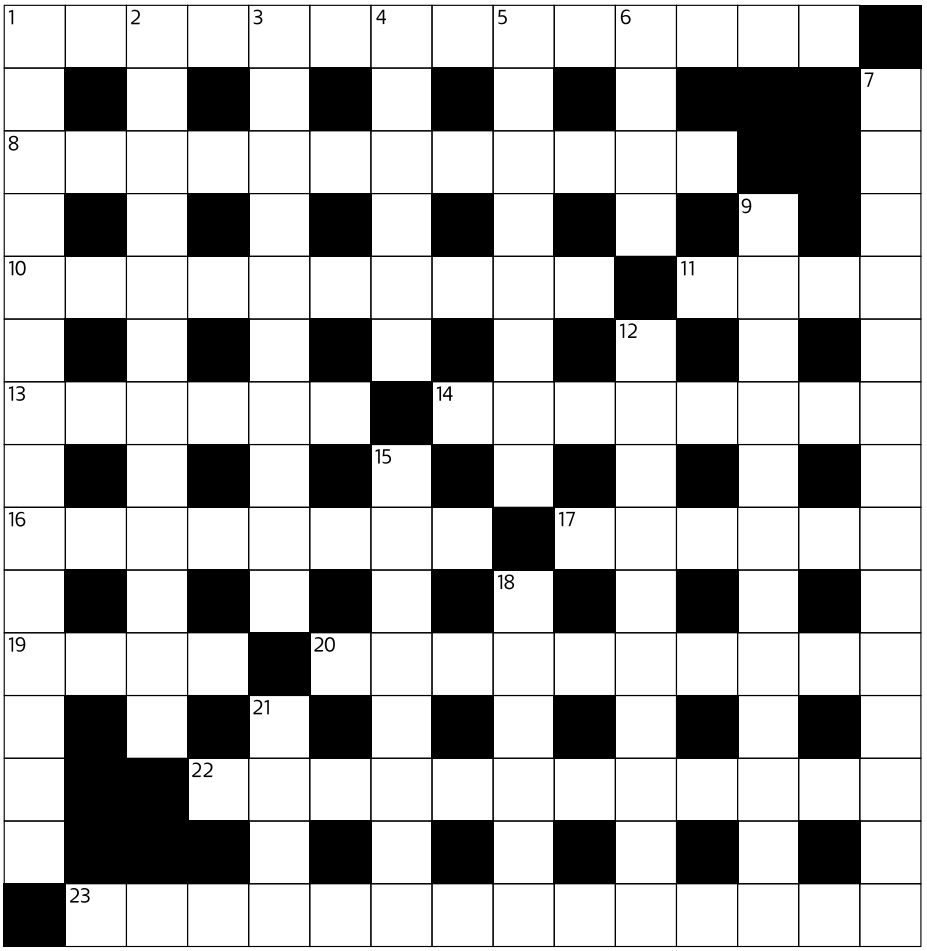
Puzzle No. 1595

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 In the way of the old spirit on personal call? (With a lot of reserve, you might not want it.) (8,6)

8 More commonly, being given a little bread? (9,3)

10 Not the Master of the Foxhounds—his trophy may be subsequently reduced. (10)

11 The first person to take quiet command, as a net result. (4)

13 One on a rostrum, alternatively on a mountain. (6)

14 Disturbed by the conflict, with no cure, it might seem. (8)

16 Taking your drawers off a wooden frame? Quite the opposite! (8)

17 Puts to the test, just as the fool is about to speak? (6)

19 Your name is probably a proper one. (4)

20 Literally, it's a thing to be remembered. (10)

22 It's not intended just to hold up your pants, though it might help in an emergency. (8,4)

23 Keep decent care of it, but you'll have to come first. (4,10)

DOWN

1 One might be a good inside fighter. (5-9)

2 A haven for the 14, in extreme cases. (6,6)

3 Slangy equivalent for mitts. (5,5)

4 Straightens out a sling shot. (6)

5 What does the poor French sailor have to complain about? (3,2,3)

6 You might file the digital type with "L," in a bunch of letters. (4)

7 Objective, for me? It's one possibility. (2,3,4,3,2)

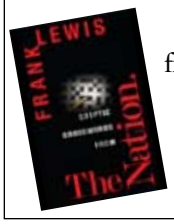
9 One used to stick his arm out all the way for it! (4-4,4)

12 Broken dates—press not invited if you have this. (10)

15 Semicircular canals might be found there. (5,3)

18 Such tales as *Frankenstein* might be obtained by the sound associated with an abundance of spirit. (6)

21 Your pipe isn't quite full, so how about a little cheese? (4)



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This puzzle originally appeared in the August 16, 1975, issue.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1594

G	O	N	E	W	I	T	H	T	H	E	W	I	N	D
U	■	A	■	H	■	I	■	A	■	A	■	N	■	O
Y	A	R	D	A	R	M	■	K	A	R	A	C	H	I
D	■	R	■	L	■	E	■	E	■	W	■	L	■	T
E	V	A	D	E	D	■	A	F	F	I	N	I	T	Y
M	■	T	■	O	■	M	■	L	■	G	■	N	■	O
A	C	E	T	I	C	A	C	I	D	■	M	E	N	U
U	■	■	■	L	■	I	■	G	■	P	■	■	■	R
P	A	R	T	■	A	N	C	H	O	R	I	T	E	S
A	■	E	■	A	■	C	■	T	■	U	■	R	■	E
S	I	D	E	S	H	O	W	■	U	N	V	E	I	L
S	■	D	■	P	■	U	■	T	■	E	■	M	■	F
A	T	E	L	I	E	R	■	H	I	L	L	O	C	K
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